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TITLE OF THESIS SCHOOL JURISDICTIONAL REORGANIZATION:

A NATURALISTIC CASE STUDY OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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SCHOOL JURISDICTIONAL REORGANIZATION:
A NATURALISTIC CASE STUDY OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

by

ROBERT LINDSAY ILES



A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled SCHOOL JURISDICTIONAL REORGANIZATION: A NATURALISTIC CASE STUDY OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT submitted by ROBERT LINDSAY ILES in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

To my parents

Jean Merle Iles

Lindsay Thomas Iles

In gratitude

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the reorganization in September 1980 of seven school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area of Alberta. Factors that led to the reorganization, the procedures used and the resultant consequences constituted the major focus of the study.

Within a hermeneutic epistemology an attempt was made to use a naturalistic research paradigm and methodology. Data were collected through interviews and documentary searches. Interviews were conducted with past and present trustees and administrators, the latter also including both local and provincial administrators. Relevant documentary material was obtained from the Central Records of the Department of Education and also from the files of Lakeland School District #5460 and Lakeland Catholic Board of Education.

An historical review of the area's school jurisdictions resulted in the identification of six major conflictual themes: religion, language and ethnicity, boundaries and transportation, taxation revenue, Bonnyville Centralized High School and inter-town rivalry. Evidence suggested that legal and political considerations had in the past resulted in provincial education authorities resorting to a variety of ad hoc interventions of limited effectiveness to manage jurisdictional conflict.

In August 1980 the Sage Institute of Canada, working as external consultants in conjunction with a steering committee composed of local and Department of Education officials, recommended to the Minister of Education the establishment of a single school district to cover an area of 6000 square kilometres with coterminous public and Roman Catholic separate jurisdictions. The prospect of increased local taxation revenue from proposed oil-sands development, a cooperative approach by local trustees and the political judgement of the Minister were shown to have been crucial factors leading to jurisdictional reorganization.

Conflict rooted in the area's complex and diverse economic, political, linguistic, religious and cultural milieu contributed to distortions in the perceptions of and communication with representatives of neighbouring jurisdictions. The consultancy intervention occurred in a non-threatening environment in which key local representatives had considerable influence over the direction of the consultancy study.

Jurisdictional reorganization assisted in the removal or diminution of many of the causes of past conflict. Partly because the implementation of a reorganized school district structure for the area had been premised on the expectation of economic growth which to date has not occurred, other issues of potential conflict between the two Lakeland school jurisdictions have emerged.

The study prompted a number of reflective comments on three additional themes: leadership in interorganizational conflict situations, the organization of public education and multiculturalism.

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The cooperation of interviewees and validators was essential for the study. (These persons are listed in Appendices A and B). Their willingness to give of their time and to trust the integrity of the researcher is especially acknowledged.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background to the Study

From the time of the earliest settlement, the provision of educational services in the Bonnyville area of north-eastern Alberta has been subject to considerable conflict. These conflicts appear to have their source not only in the rural-urban settlement patterns of the area and the inter-town rivalry common to many rural school jurisdictions, but also in the linguistic, religious and ethnic composition of the area's communities.

In the late 1970's there were prospects of significant population growth in the area as a result of the planned Esso oil-sands mega-project sited north of Cold Lake. The local school jurisdictions became increasingly concerned over the effects that these developments might have on education in the area. The likelihood that conflict between the school jurisdictions would be intensified as a result of the proposed oil-based economic development was also a matter of concern to the Minister of Education. An unstable and inefficient organizational structure existed for the likely required expansion of educational facilities and services.

Soon after assuming the office in 1979, the Minister of Education used the expected economic growth as a justification for action and requested Dr. S. N. Odynak, Associate Deputy Minister of Education, to report on the prevailing situation with a view to recommending possible courses of action open to the government. In May 1979, after visiting the area, the Minister wrote to the seven school boards that had operating schools suggesting that a study of their concerns be undertaken. Subsequently, a Ministerial Advisory Committee comprising representatives from the Department of Education and from each of the seven school boards was established under the chairmanship of Dr. Odynak.

In August 1980, a report prepared by the Sage Institute of Canada as consultants to the Ministerial Advisory Committee, recommended that all existing school jurisdictions in the area be dissolved and that a single, large public school district be formed together with a coterminous Roman Catholic separate school district. On 3 September 1980, the Minister of Education announced his concurrence with this major recommendation, but indicated that he

would "not proceed with its implementation unless the local school boards endorse it"¹

Somewhat surprisingly, given the history of jurisdictional conflict in the area, just over a week later on 11 September 1980, the Minister was able to announce that all affected boards had passed resolutions requesting their districts be dissolved and that he was in the process of implementing the Sage Institute recommendation.²

At 8.00 p.m. on 10 September 1980, the Minister of Education had dissolved Bonnyville S.D.#2665, Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D #64, Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D #67, Bevan R.C.S.S.D #124, Willow Trail R.C.S.S.D #125, Duclos P.S.S.D #2, Bonnyville School Division #46 including all the school districts contained within it;and Elizabeth School District #4886 which was part of Northland School Division #61. Simultaneously, he formed Beaver River School District #5460 to include all lands previously held by the dissolved districts and to which were added adjacent lands to the northern boundary of Township 66.

Following petition by Roman Catholic ratepayers of the new Beaver River School District, on 25 September 1980 the Minister formed Lakeland RCSSD #150 and changed the name from Beaver River to Lakeland School District #5460.

B. Problem Statement

The major research problem that formed the basis for this study was: Why, how and with what consequences did the Minister of Education reorganize school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area of north-eastern Alberta in September 1980?

A number of more specific questions were generated to guide the research. These are listed in two parts- -substantive and reflective.

Substantive Questions

1. What was the nature and basis of the long-standing educational conflict in the area?
2. What factors precipitated the establishment of the Ministerial Advisory Committee in October 1979?
3. What were the purposes of the Ministerial Advisory Committee, and how did it attempt to fulfil these purposes?

¹News Release, Alberta Education, #21, 3 September 1980.

²News Release, Alberta Education #24, 11 September 1980.

4. Why was it considered desirable and possible to implement reorganization?

5. What were the consequences of reorganization as perceived by administrators and trustees?

Reflective Questions

6. What significant issues and themes emerge from this research that are of relevance to the study and practice of educational administration?

7. How useful is a hermeneutically oriented naturalistic case study methodology for research in educational administration?

C. Relevance of the Study

Social change processes have served to intensify educational conflict during the past two decades in much of the western world (Nelson, 1981:17-47; Deutsch, 1969:31). If Bethel et al. (1978:22-27), Frey and Young (1978:18-21), Likert and Likert (1976:1-5) and Knezevich (1982:148) are correct, conflict is going to be a continuing hallmark of the administration of education as communities struggle to formulate new directions in response to changing environments. The intensification of conflict in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area in the late 1970's as a result of anticipated oil-based economic development is illustrative of such a process. An understanding of the development, implementation and consequences of the conflict management strategy used in the area may enlighten formulation of constructive management strategies in other school district conflict situations.

Research into the management of conflict in the administration of education is very limited. The ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management noted in 1978 that "surprisingly little research exists on conflict management (in education)" (Knezevich, 1982:148). March (1974:21) has stated that in the relevant educational administration literature, conflict and its management is "muted by ennui and institutionalized into bureaucratic procedures." Although conflict oriented research in educational administration is slowly increasing (e.g. Loewen, 1983) the validity of the conclusions of Knezevich and March remains.

In this study aspects of these concerns are addressed through the use of an emergent research design. It is proposed that the resultant description and analysis of a long-standing conflict situation and of administrative intervention to resolve it, might contribute to the

development of a less "muted" view of conflict and its management in education.

Supporters of Roman Catholic separate schools consider that the creation of the dual, coterminous Lakeland jurisdictions constitutes a model which, it is argued, might well be applied in other rural areas of Alberta. Thus, an examination of the processes that led to the establishment of the Lakeland jurisdictions, together with some analysis of the consequences after more than three years of operation, may provide various educational authorities with a deepened perspective from which to assess requests for the development of a dual-districts policy applicable to other areas in Alberta.

The deeply entrenched linguistic and cultural values and religious beliefs around which many of the conflictual issues in the study are set touch upon fundamental aspects of Canadian society. The former were given full constitutional status with the proclamation of the **Constitution Act**, 1981. The significance of studying the implications of official bilingualism and multiculturalism in relation to the administration of education therefore has been increased.

School district administration of education in rural Alberta is fragmented among approximately 150 independent jurisdictions. In a period of economic restraint, the inefficiency of such fragmentation is of growing concern to both the government and senior provincial administrators. The research examined a process that resulted in seven school districts being reorganized into two. Both the process and its outcome constitute models that may have application as a means of seeking to reduce the fragmentation of school districts. The research has value in its contribution to understanding of the intervention process, the reorganization consequences and the context.

The study provided opportunity to make use of the hermeneutically oriented naturalistic research methodology explicated by Guba (1978, 1981a, 1981b) and Guba and Lincoln (1981, 1982) and Lincoln (1983). Along with researchers such as Greenfield (1975:187), these writers have indicated that the application of non-positivistic research methodologies to education, and particularly to educational administration, is not well-developed or widespread. As a result of its use in this study, some reflective comments are presented on aspects of the Guba-Lincoln naturalistic research paradigm and some of its operational postures.

Finally, the study has enabled a precedent in Alberta educational history to be researched and recorded. From such a perspective, the events leading to the intervention are of inherent interest as a case study in the politics of education.

D. Delimitations

The following considerations were used to delimit the scope of the study:

1. The historical overview of educational conflict in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area was focused primarily on the years 1969-79. However, reference was made to events in earlier decades whenever the researcher considered that historical understanding dictated their inclusion.
2. The study of procedures used by the Ministerial Advisory Committee in the development of the reorganization strategy and its subsequent implementation were mostly limited to the period May 1979 to December 1980.
3. Although representatives of Medley School District #5029 (Cold Lake Military Base) participated in the Ministerial Advisory Committee, the District remained independent of the reorganization of the other jurisdictions in September 1980. Of itself it is, therefore, only of tangential interest to the study. However, the effect of its actions on neighbouring jurisdictions as well as its reasons for standing aloof from the 1980 reorganization were considered relevant.
4. The study was mainly focused on issues of interorganizational conflict between school jurisdictions. It was considered necessary, however, to include some intraorganizational conflict issues where these had particular relevance.

E. Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in the conduct of the study:

1. Reorganization in September 1980 was an important event in the education-related conflict in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area of Alberta.
2. Available data sources were adequate to pursue the research in the manner outlined.
3. A hermeneutic research paradigm provided an appropriate methodology for the study. It was held that many aspects of social reality are subjectively constructed in the minds of participants and therefore it was futile to search for a single all embracing "truth". Rather,

social environments were held to contain multiple, intangible realities.

F. Limitations

The following limitations applied to the study:

Time. The time that the researcher was able to spend in on-site data collection in the Bonnyville area was limited to approximately twenty-five days spread over a four month period. Additional interviews with other participants might have produced further insights. However, it is argued that the major dimensions of the study have been addressed. During the latter stages of the research, repetition was increasingly found in both documentary searches and interviews.

Lack of Documentary Material. Some constraints were imposed on the research by the degree to which key decisions and events were documented. Where possible, interview data were used to identify undocumented decisions and events. The identification of and access to documentary material also constituted a limitation. All requests for access to known documentary sources were granted, however, with the exception of a request for access to files from the office of the Minister of Education. Some relevant documents were occasionally found to be missing from the Department of Education Central Records files.

Interviewees. The willingness of relevant persons to be interviewed, their ability to accurately recall past events and apprehensions, and their willingness to divulge particular information to the researcher all limited the scope of the research. Only one request for an interview was refused, although a few persons had to be coaxed to participate. As expected, some interviewees were more communicative than others. It was also clearly evident both during interviews and subsequently when reading transcripts, that some interviewees had difficulty in accurately recalling past events. The efflux of time seemingly had often resulted in confusion over details. Few, however, appeared to have difficulty recounting attitudinal data. Understandably, data that may have tended to reflect unfavourably on an interviewee's own group or community was not generally volunteered. Distance precluded the researcher from interviewing a small number of persons who had been closely involved in the reorganization. A trustee of Bonnyville S.D.#2665 at the time of the reorganization, Dr. B. Brosseau, who played a central role in the reorganization process had died in 1982 prior to the commencement of this study.

G. Definitions

A number of significant terms have been defined below:

1. Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area of Alberta. This area is approximately bounded in the south by Township 59 and the north by Township 66, and includes Range 9 4th. Meridan West, east to the Saskatchewan border. Within the area are located the towns of Bonnyville, Cold Lake and Grand Centre and the village of Glendon.
2. Conflict. For the purposes of this study, a generic definition of conflict suffices. Conflict is understood as a condition in which the interests (e.g. values, goals, status, power) of two or more parties are perceived to be incompatible. Thomas (1976:890) reflects such an understanding when he argued:

. . . that conflict is the process which begins when one party perceives that the other has frustrated, or is about to frustrate, some concern of his.

Conflict may be considered either positive or negative "depending on the circumstances and values of the observer." (Brown, 1983:7)

3. Conflict Management. This term refers to intervention in a conflict situation designed to promote, maintain or resolve conflict to accomplish a predetermined end. Thus, conflict management is based on a choice of values relating to consideration of the conflict situation, the kinds of intervention deemed appropriate and the desired outcomes. Outcomes may be viewed in positive and negative terms. These are stated by Brown (1983:7) as follows:

Positive outcomes of conflict include expanded understanding of the issues, mobilization of party resources and energies, clarification of competing solutions and creative searches for alternatives, and enhanced ability to work together in the future.

Too much conflict provides high energy coupled with antagonistic attitudes, restricted and distorted flows of information, low-quality decisions based on poor information and one-sided commitments, and continuing tensions that undercut future relations among the parties.

Too little conflict mobilizes little energy within the parties, prevents disagreement and sharing of controversial information, promotes decision based on inadequate information, perpetuates unchallenged traditions or myths, and generates fragile relations that cannot face the rigors of changing circumstances.

Conflict management can be conceived of as being intervention aimed at altering a negative level of conflict to a level resulting in positive outcomes. In the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area the purpose of intervention was to modify the high level of education-related conflict to levels where conflict would more likely result in positive

consequences.

4. Reorganization. This term refers to the dissolution by Ministerial Order on 10 September 1980 of Bonnyville S.Div.#46, Bonnyville S.D.#2665, Bonnyville R.S.D.#4, Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64, Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67, Bevan R.C.S.S.D.#124, Willow Trail R.C.S.S.D.#125 and Elizabeth S.D.#4886 and the formation of Lakeland S.D.#5460 and Lakeland R.C.S.S.D.#150.

H. Organization of the Report

In this chapter the research has been briefly introduced with remarks concerning the background of events central to study, its purposes and relevance. Delimitations, assumptions and limitations were stated and a number of significant terms were defined.

Chapter Two contains a discussion of the research orientation used in the study. Details of a hermeneutically oriented naturalistic paradigm are elaborated and reasons given to support its adoption and use.

Chapter Three relates to the methodology of the study and includes a discussion of research strategy and procedures. Also discussed are the qualitatively based data collection and analysis techniques used in the research. Finally, research trustworthiness is addressed in terms of its credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Chapter Four comprises three sections: (1) an overview of each of the former school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville area; (2) an analysis of the major conflictual issues that emerged between the school jurisdictions in the period to mid 1979; and (3) an overview of previous intervention by the provincial government into educational affairs in the Bonnyville area.

In Chapter Five the formation of the Ministerial Advisory Committee in October 1979, the operation of the Committee, the involvement of the Sage Institute of Canada as consultants to the Committee, and the resultant reorganization recommendation to the Minister of Education are discussed and analysed.

The implementation of the decision by the Minister of Education to reorganize the school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area of Alberta is considered in Chapter Six.

Chapter Seven contains an analysis of the consequences of the reorganization as evaluated by district trustees and both local and provincial administrators.

In Chapter Eight study findings concerning conflict and its management are discussed and related to selected theoretical literature.

Included in Chapter Nine are reflections based on three themes of relevance to educational administration that emerged from the study : leadership in interorganizational conflict, the organization of public education and multiculturalism.

A summary of the dissertation is provided in Chapter Ten. The chapter is concluded with some reflections on the methodology of the study.

II. A RESEARCH ORIENTATION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a research orientation for the study. Some consideration is given to the factors that influenced the researcher to adopt a hermeneutic epistemology. Guba and Lincoln's naturalistic paradigm is outlined and a rationale provided for its use in this study. Finally, the value of a case study approach for such research is discussed.

A. Introduction

In recent years the theory movement that has dominated the study of educational administration since the early 1950's has been the subject of serious questioning (Erickson, 1979; Greenfield, 1979a, 1979b; Boyan, 1981; Foster, 1982; Culbertson, 1983a, 1983b). Greenfield (1979b:226, 228), after reviewing research in educational administration in the United States and Canada, was able to write that "the great promise of the theory movement seems as far away as ever" and that it is struggling "to find a theoretical base from which to launch productive research." Erickson (1979:12) concluded his state-of-the art review of research in educational administration by noting, "It is time, I believe, for a major reconsideration of what research on educational organization is, or should be, all about."

Some criticism has been aimed at the movement's rigid adherence to logical positivist epistemology whose sufficiency on its own as a basis for further productive development of the field has been judged to be inadequate (Culbertson, 1983:3; 1981b:18). This adherence to positivism appears to have resulted in educational administration theory becoming increasingly remote from those who practice the administration of education. Culbertson (1981b:18) has written:

I distrust logical positivism's capacity to serve as a sufficient guide for the study of a field of practice like educational administration, in part because leadership practice is more than a science.

Greenfield (1979b:232-3) has been similarly critical of the theory-practice crevasse in educational administration.

What appears to have happened in the study of educational administration . . . is that ideas, assumptions and convictions - the theories - which academics use to describe organization and administration now exist in a world of their own. At least, they stand in marked contrast to what many others in schools (and system and central administration officers) understand as their realities.

Sergiovanni and Carver (1973:4) acknowledged that "Scientific approaches to administration . . . offer little direct help in formulating operational strategies for school administrators."

Prior to his becoming acquainted with the writings quoted above and as a result of his initial graduate studies in educational administration in the University of Melbourne, the researcher had developed a general uneasiness concerning the seeming lack of congruence and relevance between much of the theory and practice in the field. Since then the researcher has developed an interest in alternate approaches to the study of educational administration that might better address some of the inadequacies of the positivist paradigm on which most past research has been based.

B. A Hermeneutic Epistemology

The researcher decided to use a hermeneutic epistemology in the conduct of this inquiry.

The major defining assumptions of a hermeneutic epistemology have been outlined by Culbertson (1981a:3-4).

1. Natural and human phenomena are generically different and therefore cannot be treated in the same manner.
2. Understanding and interpretation of meaning within a given context constitute its purposes.
3. Purposes are achieved essentially through inductive and qualitative modes of study based upon reasoned reflection that circles "back and forth between the part and the whole" (Culbertson, 1981a:3).
4. Neutrality is not possible and, indeed, subjective communication and interaction between researcher and respondent can be positively viewed as a "conversation or dialogue to produce new things."
5. The formation of research questions to guide inquiry is of critical importance. These questions are shaped by the horizon of the inquirer (limited or expansive, immediate focus or far reaching, open or closed perspectives) and by the "forestructure of understanding" she/he brings to the research.
6. Accuracy of interpretation is based upon the object studied, its context, the horizon of the inquiry, the knowledge and understanding of the inquirer and the subjective views she/he

brings to the task.

7. Hermeneutic inquiry is able to encompass both facts and values.

C. A Naturalistic Paradigm

Within a hermeneutic epistemological framework, a number of distinctive paradigms may be identified e.g. ethnographic, phenomenological, historical.³ In this study a paradigm designated "naturalistic" by its explicators Guba (1978, 1981a, 1981b); Guba and Lincoln (1981, 1982); Owens (1982) and Lincoln (1983) was adopted.

Guba and Lincoln's (1982:236) naturalistic paradigm may be understood as one form of hermeneutic inquiry. In its design and assumptions, this study adheres to the five defining axioms that Guba and Lincoln (1982:237) use to characterise research in a naturalistic paradigm. These axioms, which are outlined below, closely mirror those characteristics of the hermeneutic research orientation suggested by Culbertson.

1. For the social researcher there are multiple, intangible realities "devised in the minds of persons to extend meaning to events and render them interpretable and understandable" (Guba, 1981b:6).
2. In social research inquirers and respondents influence each other through their mutual interaction.
3. The aim of naturalistic research is "to devise ideographic working hypothesis that fit a particular context" (Guba, 1981b:5) rather than seeking aggregatable hypotheses. It is agreed that because phenomena are neither time nor context free, law-like generalizations are impossible although "some transferability of these hypotheses may be possible from situation to situation, depending on the degree of temporal and contextual similarity" (Guba and Lincoln, 1982:238).
4. Explanation is sought in terms of patterns of plausible influence established through holistic field study rather than cause-effect relationships. Accordingly, an action is attributable "in terms of multiple, interacting factors, events, processes that shape it and are part of it" (Guba and Lincoln, 1982:238).
5. All inquiry is value-bound by inquirer values, the paradigm selected, the methods chosen

³Paradigm is defined here as referring to an epistemological model or prototype with "very basic meta-physical assumptions" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:23) and operational postures used to guide disciplined inquiry.

and the values "inherent in the context" (Guba and Lincoln, 1982:238).

The use of the term "naturalistic" may be questioned. As Lynch (1983) has pointed out, "naturalistic", in the sense of being non-experimental, may define studies using highly quantitative data within a positivistic research paradigm. For example, most research based on survey data obtained through questionnaires could be classified in this manner.

In this study, "naturalistic" is being used as it is defined by Guba (1978; 1981a; 1981b) and Guba and Lincoln (1981, 1982) to apply to a non-positivistic research paradigm. To remind the reader of the particular orientation of this paradigm, the hyphenated phrase "hermeneutic-naturalistic" has been selected to indicate both the epistemology and research paradigm that underlie the present study.

D. Rationale

The choice of a hermeneutic-naturalistic paradigm for the study was influenced by the following considerations:

1. A major focus of the study was the understandings of a large number of persons involved in the relevant events and the meanings they attached to those events;
2. The centrality of values to the study;
3. The need to use interviews for the collection of data with the inevitable researcher-respondent interaction;
4. The complexity and time sequence of events under study precluded any possibility of attempting to establish cause-effect relationships;
5. The researcher's scepticism with regard to research attempts in educational administration to develop law-like generalizations based on a positivistic paradigm;
6. An emergent, expansive approach to the study was required to enable the researcher to seek out the "multiple, interacting factors, events, and processes" involved;
7. A paradigm was sought that did not relegate case study based research to a place of implied inferiority as was done by Campbell and Stanley (1966:6).

The hermeneutic-naturalistic paradigm permitted the placing of "greater emphasis upon the specific as opposed to the general" (Greenfield, 1979b:237) in order to seek greater "understanding rather than explanation" (Foster, 1980:15). The worth of such an approach is suggested by Foster (1980:15):

. . . the regularity and predictability of administrative decision-making, of organizational life itself, is a human regularity, one bounded to the nature of culture and of thought. It is, in essence, a hermeneutically derived regularity.

The paradigm enabled the relations between (a) the various parts and the whole and (b) the unique and the general to be analysed. It also provided for Greenfield's (1979b:238) methodological question to be addressed, "What is the relation between the unique event and the context in which it occurs?" Thus, a case study approach to research is not so much a methodological issue as an inherent part of a hermeneutic-naturalistic paradigm.

E. A Case Study Approach

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982:59) this research may be considered as a historical organization case study. Aspects of the conception, birth and infant years of the two coterminous Lakeland school districts have been traced.

A case study may be defined as "a detailed examination of one setting, or one single subject, or one single depository of documents, or one particular event" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982:58). It is argued that the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/ Grand Centre area constitutes one, albeit large, geographical setting for the study. It may also be considered as "one single subject" having many component parts. Whether the reorganization might be viewed as "one particular event" is more problematic.

The term "case study" is very broadly used in research literature and therefore tends to be insufficiently definitive. In phenomenological, naturalistic, ethnographic and other forms of hermeneutic inquiry, case study methodology is the basic building block of research. On the other hand, Campbell and Stanley (1966:6,8,40) use the term for pre-experimental studies and as a "catch all" category for all other studies that are not identifiable with one or other of their twelve experimental design categories. Considering the range of types of studies to which it is applied, the term "case study" is of limited use. Unfortunately, no alternate descriptor readily emerges from the literature.

Specific strengths of the case study approach have been noted by numerous authors and reflect many of the characteristics of a hermeneutic-naturalistic research orientation. Stake (1976:6) referred to case studies developing "understanding, extension of experience and increase in conviction in that which is known." Kennedy (1978:20) gave three particular advantages of research anchored in case studies: the possibility of gathering longitudinal data;

the utilization of a multi-disciplinary approach; and the capacity to achieve both precision and depth of description. Hofferbert (1974:138) commented that a case study approach enabled "the dynamic of the process" to be "richly and lucidly" illustrated. In addition, a case study approach enables attention to be focused on how particular groups of people deal with specific problems (Shaw, 1978:2). Eckstein (1975:97) reflected the configurative-ideographic character of case studies when he referred to understanding the "overall configuration of politics" through the eyes of those who have participated in the events under study.

Blau (1955:302) directed attention to two advantages of a case study approach, both of which apply to the present study: (a) social processes may be more directly examined; and (b) it is possible for the researcher using this approach to shuttle back and forth between data gathering and data analysis stages.

F. Summary

This was a descriptive case study based on a hermeneutic epistemology. The central purposes of the study were to develop understandings and interpret meanings. Generalization was inductive and based upon reasoned reflection. No attempt was made to generate law-like statements possessing predictive validity. In contrast to the technical and emancipatory relationships understood between knowledge and practice in positivistic and critical theory epistemologies respectively, in this study that relationship was viewed as a practical one in which "policy and practice [were] informed through understandings and interpretations of past events and contexts" (Culbertson, 1981a:6).

An attempt was made to conduct this case study within a hermeneutic-naturalistic paradigm. The object of the study was the development of "ideographic working hypotheses" rather than "context free truth statements" (Guba, 1981a:5). An emergent research design was used; multiple, intangible realities were assumed; exploration of values was an inherent part of the study; and explanation of action was sought "in terms of multiple interacting factors, events, and processes that shape it and are part of it" (Guba and Lincoln, 1982:238).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the research methodology is introduced by reference to the operational purposes and the operational postures of the study. Preliminary investigations are noted and reasons for the specific choice of topic are outlined. A general research strategy is then presented. Methods for the collection and analysis of data from both documentary sources and interviews are discussed. Finally, the issue of research trustworthiness is addressed.

A. Statement of Purpose

The major purpose of the study was to examine the events, decisions and the resultant consequences of the reorganization of school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area of Alberta in September 1980.

Embedded within this statement were a number of more specific operational purposes:

1. To describe and analyse the conflicting perspectives on education held by significant groups in the area;
2. To describe and analyse the views of (a) local administrators and (b) Department of Education administrators in regard to these conflicts;
3. To describe and analyse the operational procedures developed by the Ministerial Advisory Committee and its consultants, the Sage Institute of Canada;
4. To describe and analyse the legal, organizational and administrative procedures used to implement the reorganization;
5. To describe and analyse understandings held by past and present trustees and administrators, including Department of Education administrators as to the merits of the Lakeland jurisdiction.

B. Operational Postures

The fundamental axioms, outlined in Chapter Two, must be differentiated from the methodological postures commonly assumed in hermeneutic-naturalistic inquiry. Guba (1978:11-18; 1981b:7-8) and Guba and Lincoln (1982:244-6) have noted the following research postures as being applicable to naturalistic inquiry: a concern with relevance; the use

of qualitative methods; inductive reasoning; the use of a problem rather than theory to guide research; a stress upon tacit knowledge; the adoption of an expansionist stance resulting in divergent inquiry focusing on holistic and emergent patterns; the use of the researcher as an instrument for data collection; an orientation to discovery; a focus upon naturally-occurring situations in natural settings; an acceptance of variable treatment during study; a preparedness to work in an open inquiry situation; and a concern with holistic data analysis.

While Guba (1981:7) noted that those working in this paradigm are "not compelled to take these postures", nevertheless, some measure of correspondence between acceptance of such an inquiry paradigm and research postures commonly associated with it is to be expected. Guba and Lincoln (1982:244) have commented that "the collectivity of postures support and reinforce one another in extremely synergistic ways." In this study all the listed postures were of relevance.

Inevitably, however, as the interplay of operational postures in each inquiry is unique, the significance of particular postures in any one study will vary. In this study, for example, the utilization of qualitative methods, of inductive reasoning, of a problem guided research stance and of the researcher as the instrument of data collection were critically important postures. While, on the other hand, variability of treatment during the study was not an issue due to the historical perspective of the study, and important use was made of propositional knowledge alongside tacit knowledge. Certainly, none of the listed postures were negated in the course of the inquiry. Actual procedures used in the study are outlined later in this chapter.

C. Preliminary Investigations

A number of essential, preliminary investigative activities were undertaken. These were designed to ascertain the worth of the proposed study and its feasibility and to enable research questions to be formulated.

1. As part of Educational Administration courses 645 and 646, Policy Development in Education, a detailed analysis was made during May and June 1983 of "The Future of Education in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre Area of Alberta." This document constituted the report to the Minister of Education developed by the Sage Institute of Canada in its capacity as external consultant to the Ministerial Advisory Committee.

2. On 2 June 1983, an extended interview was conducted with Dr. S. N. Odynak, Associate Deputy Minister of Education. Dr. Odynak served as chairman of the 1979-80 Ministerial Advisory Committee appointed to inquire into the provision of educational services in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/ Grand Centre area of Alberta.

3. Several informal conversations were also held with a colleague Mr. J. Jeffrey who, at the time of reorganization, was an Assistant to the Deputy Minister of Education.

4. In September 1983, the researcher visited Mr. G. Keirnan, superintendent of Lakeland School District #5460 and Mr. L. Remillard, superintendent of Lakeland Catholic Board of Education #150 to discuss the proposed research and to seek the approval of their respective Boards.

D. Choice of Topic

Based on the preliminary investigations, the researcher decided that the topic was worthy of study for the following reasons:

1. The proposed study would enable detailed research of a significant administrative undertaking by the Department of Education in conjunction with local jurisdictions.
2. Initial inquiries indicated that both Department of Education and local administrators considered that the reorganization had been successful. There appeared to be merit in seeking to understand how widely this view was held and to attempt to account for the perceived success.
3. A variety of important issues of both academic and practical interest in educational administration appeared to be identifiable in the study. Among these were (a) the organization of public education, (b) the significance of politics in the administration of education, (c) the planning and implementation of educational change, (d) the development of a prototype school district structure for rural Alberta, (e) the application of constitutional law in the administration of education, (f) the management of interorganizational conflict in education, and (g) the impact of multiculturalism in the administration of education.
4. The Boards of Trustees and superintendents of both Lakeland school districts expressed interest in and support for the study.
5. The study was considered feasible in terms of the time and resources available to the

researcher.

6. Sufficient sources for data collection appeared to be available. Both Lakeland school districts and the Department of Education indicated that relevant documentary material was extant and would be accessible by the researcher. Second, most of those who actively participated in the reorganization events could be readily contacted in either Edmonton or the study area.
7. The researcher possessed an interest in applying a hermeneutic-naturalistic research paradigm to the study of educational administration. The proposed study seemed to be best undertaken using such an approach (Guba, 1981b:7).

E. Research Strategy

The following research procedures were adopted:

1. Approval to undertake the study was obtained in writing from the Board of Trustees of both Lakeland School District #5460 and Lakeland Catholic Board of Education #150. This essentially consisted of (a) the granting of access to relevant files and other documentary material, and (b) permission to approach district staff for the purpose of requesting an interview. Permission was also granted by the office of the Deputy Minister of Education for the researcher to access relevant files in the Central Records of the Department of Education.

2. A problem statement, together with a number of research questions, was framed to bound and guide the inquiry. The open, emergent research design allowed subsequent data collection and analysis to profit from all that had been learned to that point and, therefore, the research questions and problem statement were able to be progressively refined and sharpened in focus as the study proceeded.

3. Data collection was undertaken through documentary research and interviews. Bogdan and Biklen (1982:54) have stressed the importance of these data sources for historical organization case studies:

You will rely on data sources such as interviews with people who have been associated with the organization . . . and existing written records . . . The determination that sufficient material in your initial inventory of people and documents exists, provides a starting point as well as the design for your data collection.

These data were collected in the period October 1983 to February 1984. Although it was initially intended that records and documents be searched prior to interviews, logistical considerations, together with the availability of some respondents required that, for most of the

above period, both research activities be undertaken in tandem. However, the greater part of the examination of records and documents was undertaken prior to the bulk of the interviews.

In retrospect, the overlapping of both data collection activities was beneficial. Each served to inform and refocus inquiry through the other. After completing most of the interviews the researcher found it necessary to review many records and documents that had been searched at an earlier date.

4. It was necessary to commence the analysis of data during the data collection process. Because the researcher acted as the instrument of data collection, progressive interaction with the data was inevitable and necessary. Sequential analysis of data in the light of the major research questions, served to inform subsequent interviews and documentary examination.

5. Final data analysis and writing up of the study were undertaken in the period February to June 1984.

F. Data Collection

Data were collected from documentary sources and by interviews. In this section both sources are discussed.

Documentary Material

The following documents and records in the possession of the Lakeland school districts (including those of the former districts) were researched: (a) minutes of meetings of Boards of Trustees, (b) general correspondence, (c) files relating to the 1980 reorganization and its implementation, (d) annual financial reports, (e) district maps, and (f) tuition and transportation agreements.

Department of Education files for each of the present and former school districts in the study area were examined. In addition, Departmental files relating to the 1972 Board of Inquiry into School Affairs in Bonnyville chaired by Dr. W. H. Swift (Swift Inquiry), the Ad Hoc Special Projects Committee, and Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre Steering Committee (Ministerial Advisory Committee) were searched. Through the Department of Education library, the transcript of proceedings of the Swift Inquiry was obtained from the Communications Branch of the Department.

Another source of documentary material was the newspaper **Bonnyville Nouvelle** especially for the years 1979 and 1980. These were accessed through the library of the Legislative Assembly in Edmonton.

The researcher corresponded with a number of individuals (see Bibliography) and their letters constituted a further documentary source.

The only documentary source to which access was not granted were any relevant files in the office of the Minister of Education.

Interviews

Interviews were also used as a major component of data collection. These served three specific purposes: (a) to document personal and group perspectives concerning events relevant to the study, (b) to provide objective data not available in documentary sources, and (c) to confirm and to assist in interpreting data obtained from documents and records.

In this study, interviews were conducted with thirty-six persons and included both past and present local and provincial administrators and area trustees (See Appendix A). As such, they may be designated as elite interviews (Dexter, 1970:5).

The process used to identify potential interviewees was similar to that suggested by Gergen (1968:206) for the leadership pool model. Initially, those trustees and administrators whose names appeared in documentary sources as having been associated with the Bonnyville area school jurisdictions at the time of reorganization or who were known to have had considerable involvement in education in the area, were listed. When interviewed, these respondents were asked, and indeed often volunteered, the names of others who were knowledgeable concerning aspects of the study.

A variety of approaches to potential respondents was used. Generally, these individuals were initially contacted by a letter which introduced the researcher, the purpose of the study and the reason for requesting an interview with that person. Sometimes letters listed two or three particular areas of interest or a number of general questions that might be addressed in an interview. Letters were usually concluded by informing the addressee that the researcher would telephone within a week to further discuss the request and, with their concurrence, make arrangements for an interview.

On quite a number of occasions, logistical and time considerations required that an individual be approached directly by telephone. In a few cases, it was convenient to make a personal approach to request an interview. All approaches were successfully employed, although a few individuals expressed reticence and took a degree of coaxing before agreeing to an interview.

The Minister of Education was the only person to refuse an interview; however, the researcher accepted an invitation to submit selected questions in writing. Six such questions were submitted to which the Minister subsequently replied.

The nature of each interview varied with (a) the interviewee, (b) the particular association the respondent presently or formerly had with school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville area, (c) the stage of the research at the time of the interview, and (d) the willingness of the respondent to speak freely. For example, interviews conducted early in the research tended to be concentrated more on its historical aspects, although never to the complete neglect of other aspects of the study. As the researcher's understanding of the nature of the historical conflicts matured, greater attention was devoted in interviews to the reorganization process and its outcomes.

Most interviews were relatively unstructured and open ended although in all cases the researcher attempted to ensure they were "focused around particular topics or guided by some general questions" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982:136). As far as possible respondents were not interrupted although sometimes the researcher had to redirect attention to the matters relevant to the study. On occasions the researcher did interject for purposes of clarification or to probe further a particular understanding or interpretation. Some respondents were not comfortable with a largely unstructured format. Interviews with these persons were therefore forced into a semi-structured format with the researcher asking a larger number of more specific questions. Nevertheless, in all interviews the researcher endeavoured to generate a relaxed, non-threatening, conversational atmosphere.

In the later stages of the data collection, interviews tended to become more structured (Guba and Lincoln, 1981:164) and focused (Cohen and Manion, 1980:259) as the researcher attempted to develop those aspects of the study that had emerged as being of particular interest or which required more exploration. On occasions, the researcher proffered his own tentative understandings and interpretations for respondent comment.

Locations for interviews were varied. Seven were conducted in the respondent's home, two in the researcher's office and twenty-one in the respondent's office. Other interviews were conducted in a library, a hospital, the kitchen of a hamburger bar, a school district board room and a hotel restaurant. Situations that largely precluded opportunities for interruption provided the most conducive environment for assiduous conversation.

Prior to the commencement of each interview, the researcher requested permission to tape record the interview. The respondent was informed that the tape could be readily turned off at any stage for "off the record" comments. In all but three interviews permission was granted. In two situations the use of a tape recorder was not feasible, while on the third occasion the respondent provided a considerable amount of information that could possibly have been detracting to him had it been attributed. On a number of occasions respondents did request that the tape recorder be stopped while they volunteered "off the record" comments. Other respondents waited until the conclusion of the interview before offering non-attributable comments of a sensitive nature. Such comments were often very valuable in providing the researcher with particular insights which contributed greatly to his understanding and interpretation of other data.

Clearly, respondents were aware of the tape recorder and seemingly drew a clear distinction between attributable and non-attributable comments. Not always did respondents request stopping of the tape recorder for non-attributable remarks. Sometimes they simply prefaced a comment with "Don't quote me on this."

The researcher considered that the advantage of having a record of an interview outweighed the fact that undoubtedly some pertinent, but sensitive comments were withheld by some respondents. A further advantage in using the tape recorder was that both the researcher and the respondent were more easily able to differentiate between attributable and non-attributable comments. It should be noted, however, that most of the data relating to the research questions was not considered to be of a sensitive nature by most respondents. Much of it, including many of the views held by participants were matters of public record.

Categories of Data

Various categories of data were collected as a result of the two major data collection methods already outlined. These categories are listed below:

1. Typed transcripts of all recorded interviews;
2. Detailed written accounts of non-recorded interviews;
3. Notes generated during document and record searches;
4. Transcripts of quotations from minutes, correspondence and other official documents of past and present school jurisdictions (tape recorded during field research at Bonnyville);
5. Copies of official documents (Sage Institute of Canada report to the Minister of Education, Report of the 1972 Swift Inquiry including selected portions of the transcript of the evidence taken, copies of tuition and transportation agreements, other assorted documents);
6. Photocopies of relevant articles from the **Bonnyville Nouvelle**;
7. Other sources of data (maps from the Department of Municipal Affairs and Bonnyville Municipal District #87, several local histories of the area, documents provided by Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Alberta Catholic School Trustee Association and the Sage Institute of Canada, dissertations and published material).
8. The researcher travelled through the study area to familiarize himself with its physical geography, including the location of schools, the physical nature of the smaller communities and the road network.

G. Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1982:145) have suggested that:

Analysis involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others.

In this section, the procedures that were used to analyse the data both during the collection stage as well as subsequently, have been outlined. These procedures are based on those suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1982:146-70) and Guba and Lincoln (1981:236-47).

As has already been indicated, data analysis tended to parallel data collection. Understandings and interpretations developed from the analysis of earlier data were used to inform and direct later data collection. This constant interaction between data collection and

data analysis enabled the researcher to delineate the boundaries of the study, to sharpen the focus of the research questions and to gradually structure the major components of the study.

Analysis During Data Collection

The research questions not only guided data collection but also the analysis of the data. From these questions were developed a larger set of analytic questions deriving from both the research questions and the preliminary investigations and which formed part of the research proposal document. As data were analysed, these analytical questions were refined. The progressive identification of gaps in the researcher's understanding were used to direct further data collection.

Ideas, hunches and speculative thoughts generated during data collection activities were recorded. These were either set down in writing or tape recorded. Time spent in travelling between Edmonton and Bonnyville was occasionally used for the latter purpose. These musings were often explored in subsequent interviews. When a respondent was particularly informative, the researcher selectively advanced, for respondent reaction, some of his own tentative understandings and interpretations.

Initially, the research was conceptualized solely as a study in conflict management. However, as data were collected and analysed it became increasingly apparent that an a priori conflict management conceptualization would exclude or distort important aspects of the reorganization that were emerging from the data. Therefore, as a result of the initial analysis of data, it was decided to reconceptualize the study to a more open, emergent design. Such a posture not only appeared to promote a more complete treatment of the data and the possibility of a richer study, but also was more reflective of a hermeneutic-naturalistic research paradigm.

During data collection, a subject category filing system was developed. The subject matter of the study initially suggested a number of categories. Files were developed for each of the former, as well as the present school jurisdictions in the area. As each non-interview datum was generated, it was placed in an appropriate file. Much of the data relating to past conflict were initially located in the files developed for each of the former jurisdictions, while data relating to consequences of the reorganization were collected in the files of the two Lakeland districts. New files were progressively opened for data which were not appropriately placed in existing files. Occasionally, as the study developed, data in some files were reorganized into

more appropriate analysis categories. A total of thirty-two such files were generated. Each file was given a three letter designation related to its contents.

Later Analysis

Although all transcripts of interviews had been read during the data collection process, the actual coding of the data was left until data collection had been virtually completed. Each transcript was placed in a separate, spirally bound booklet with numbered pages. These booklets were numbered from 01 to 32 thus enabling any page of transcript to be located by use of a four digit number.

All transcripts were re-read and coded according to the filing system letter code. The location of each datum was individually noted on a separate file card showing the appropriate file letter code, the transcript reference and a brief subject description. New files were created for data not classifiable within the existing filing code. All coded cards were then placed in the appropriate file. Within a number of files data were also subdivided to assist thematic treatment of the data.

Documents and records such as memos, letters and reports were analysed by inquiring as to who sent it? to whom? with what message? why? with what effect? and in what context? Such inquiry involved both tracking i.e. "following official recordings of transactions or events," as well as analysis of "the values, sentiments, intentions, beliefs or ideologies of the sources or authors of the documents" in order to make inferences about individual groups or societal values (Guba and Lincoln, 1981:237).

H. Research Trustworthiness

Rather than referring to validity and reliability of research design, it is more meaningful within a hermeneutic-naturalistic research paradigm to refer to authenticity (Guba, 1978:61) or trustworthiness (Guba 1981b:10). Four aspects of research trustworthiness have been identified by Guba (1981b:10-11) as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Each of these has been discussed in turn.

Credibility

Credibility has to do with degree of confidence in the findings of a particular inquiry. Because hermeneutic-naturalistic research acknowledges that social realities are to a large extent subjectively constructed in the minds of people, researchers need to ensure that they get as close to the data sources as possible, while at the same time, exercising caution "to avoid becoming over-involved with the respondents" (Guba, 1981a:85).

Several measures were taken in this study to promote credibility.

1. The researcher was engaged in researching, analysing and interpreting the data and writing up the study for a total period in excess of twelve months (May 1983 - June 1984). During this period, the researcher interviewed a range of individuals whose viewpoints on many issues differed widely. In addition, he was exposed to a considerable and varied amount of related documentary material.

2. Data derived from separate sources was triangulated (Guba, 1981a:85; Jick, 1979:602). In particular, interview data were cross-referenced and, whenever possible, juxtaposed with data derived from documentary sources. Documentary based data from different sources were also compared.

3. A collection of referential adequacy materials has been established. These consist of transcriptions and photocopies of a wide range of relevant documents and records, together with original tapes of all interviews and their transcripts.

4. The researcher sought to establish internal coherence in the reporting of this study. Wherever data from different sources, representing different perspectives conflicted (which was not unexpected, given the multiple realities assumed in the study) care was taken to advance an interpretation that sought to recognize and express these differences.

5. The process of member checking which Guba (1981a:85) acknowledged as "the single most important action inquirers can take, for it goes to the heart of credibility criterion" was undertaken. The researcher often advanced his understandings and interpretations during the course of interviews to establish "whether their [the respondents] realities have been appropriately understood" (Guba and Lincoln, 1982:264). Each of the four descriptive chapters of the dissertation was submitted in draft form to four persons for comment. The sixteen validators were each chosen because of their association with the events discussed in a particular chapter. For each chapter persons from both the public and the Catholic

jurisdictions were included in the validation group. In the case of Chapters Five and Six, persons associated with the Department of Education and the Sage Institute of Canada were included. Ten of the sixteen validators had been interviewed in the data collection stage of the study. Each was asked to comment on accuracy and fairness of presentation. Nine detailed responses were received (See Appendix B). These enabled the researcher to clarify a number of points of detail and in some places to modify the emphasis. A few validators indicated additional substantive material. Unknown to them, however, most of these suggestions had been discussed in other chapters.

Validators commented positively on the draft chapters. A former local administrator wrote concerning Chapter Four, "I have found the chapter to be accurate and your perceptions well founded." After indicating several parts of the text that he thought required clarification, an administrator of francophone background stated, " . . . generally I have a high respect for your grasp of a very highly complex and volatile sociological phenomenon which Bonnyville and area is." In relation to Chapter Five a former provincial administrator declared, "An excellent piece of work. The detail is extremely accurate." A former local administrator referred to Chapter Six as "concise and accurate." A provincial administrator said of the same chapter, "The key actors and roles have been faithfully reported and interpreted." He continued, "You have recorded a precedent in Alberta history with clarity." A number of validators commented in reference to different chapters that the presentation "made for most interesting reading."

Transferability

Because generalization is discounted in hermeneutic-naturalistic research "except in the limited sense of transferability of findings from one context to another if there is substantial similarity between the two" (Guba, 1981b:11), sampling was not an issue in this study. Rather, emphasis was upon gathering data from as many sources as possible so that a full and relevant description of the events could be developed. The objective of the research was to build a "thick" (Geertz, 1973), and "rich" (Guba and Lincoln, 1982:235) descriptive account of the processes involved in the development and implementation of the reorganization so as to assist readers in assessing the degree of transferability of the findings of this study to a similar situation with which they may be familiar.

Dependability

The emergent nature of hermeneutic-naturalistic research design precludes replication of a study. Rather, researchers "are concerned with the stability of the data" (Guba, 1981a:86) and its fair and consistent treatment. However, they:

must make allowance for apparent instabilities arising either because different realities are being tapped or because of instrumental shifts stemming from developing insights on the part of the investigator-as-instrument.(Guba, 1981a:86)

Two procedures were adopted in the study to support claims of dependability. As already indicated, two methods of data collection were used: documentary searches and interviews. Data resulting from one method were consistently used to confirm that derived from the other method. Thus, support for dependability and stability of data was inter-connected.

Second, an audit trail was established to enable examination of "the processes whereby data were collected and analysed and interpretations were made" (Guba, 1981a:87). The researcher's trail includes diary entries noting the date of all interviews; the original tapes of those interviews; a notebook and audio tape containing records of understandings, interpretations, questions, issues for clarification and stimulation ideas; and diary entries of dates of researching various documentary materials.

Confirmability

Discussion of objectivity is conceptually irrelevant in hermeneutic-naturalistic research. However, reference may be made to confirmability of the data instead of attempting to attribute objectivity to the researcher.

In this study, it is suggested that adherence to the accepted tenets of historical data analysis and interpretation and use of triangulation procedures, as previously outlined, promoted fairness in treatment and confirmability of the data. Claims of accuracy and fairness in the presentation of data were verified by the external validation as already reported.

The researcher sought to practice a reflexivity while engaged in data collection and analysis, to attempt

to uncover one's underlying epistemological assumptions, reasons for formulating the study in a particular way, and implicit assumptions, biases, or prejudices about the context or problem...(Guba and Lincoln, 1982: 248)

Due to such a reflective activity a number of changes in the formulation of the study, as

previously noted, were made in consultation with members of the candidate's supervisory committee.

As an Australian, the researcher was particularly conscious of the need to acknowledge his own biases, prejudices and implicit assumptions concerning the social context of the study. Some of the researcher's reasons for the particular formulation of the study have been noted earlier in this chapter. The researcher also holds personal views as to the importance of an overt Christian perspective in education; the desirability of an ecumenical and comparative approach to religion in public schools in a pluralist society; the social relevance of both bilingualism and multiculturalism in Canadian society; and a general belief that in a democratic society primary rights attach to the individual rather than to groups, institutions or the wider society.

I. Summary Comment

In this descriptive case study an attempt was made to use the naturalistic research paradigm explicated by Guba and by Guba and Lincoln. Because of the paradigm's hermeneutic orientation the major objectives of the study were the development of understanding and the interpretation concerning the events, decisions and consequences of the reorganization of school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area of Alberta in September 1980. Preliminary investigations were undertaken to confirm the worth and feasibility of the study.

Data were collected by interview of past and present area school trustees and local and provincial administrators. An extensive survey of documentary sources was also conducted. These data were analysed both during and subsequent to their collection. Previously assembled data were used to guide the collection of further data.

Research trustworthiness was addressed by appropriate measures to ensure the credibility, dependability and confirmability of the data. It was nevertheless recognized by the researcher that any or all of the methodological procedures detailed in this chapter will not compel anyone to accept the research as unassailable. Rather, they will increase the probability of trustworthiness being granted.

IV. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

This chapter provides an historical overview of the former school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area prior to the reorganization in 1980. While the educational history of this area is of considerable interest, it did not constitute the central focus of the study and is presented only to the extent necessary to set the reorganization within an adequate historical context.

The first part of the chapter provides an overview of selected characteristics and aspects of the operational history of eight of the former school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area. In the second part, the major conflictual issues that affected the various school jurisdictions are identified and discussed. In the final part, previous interventions into educational affairs in the area by the Minister of Education and officials of the Department are documented and discussed.

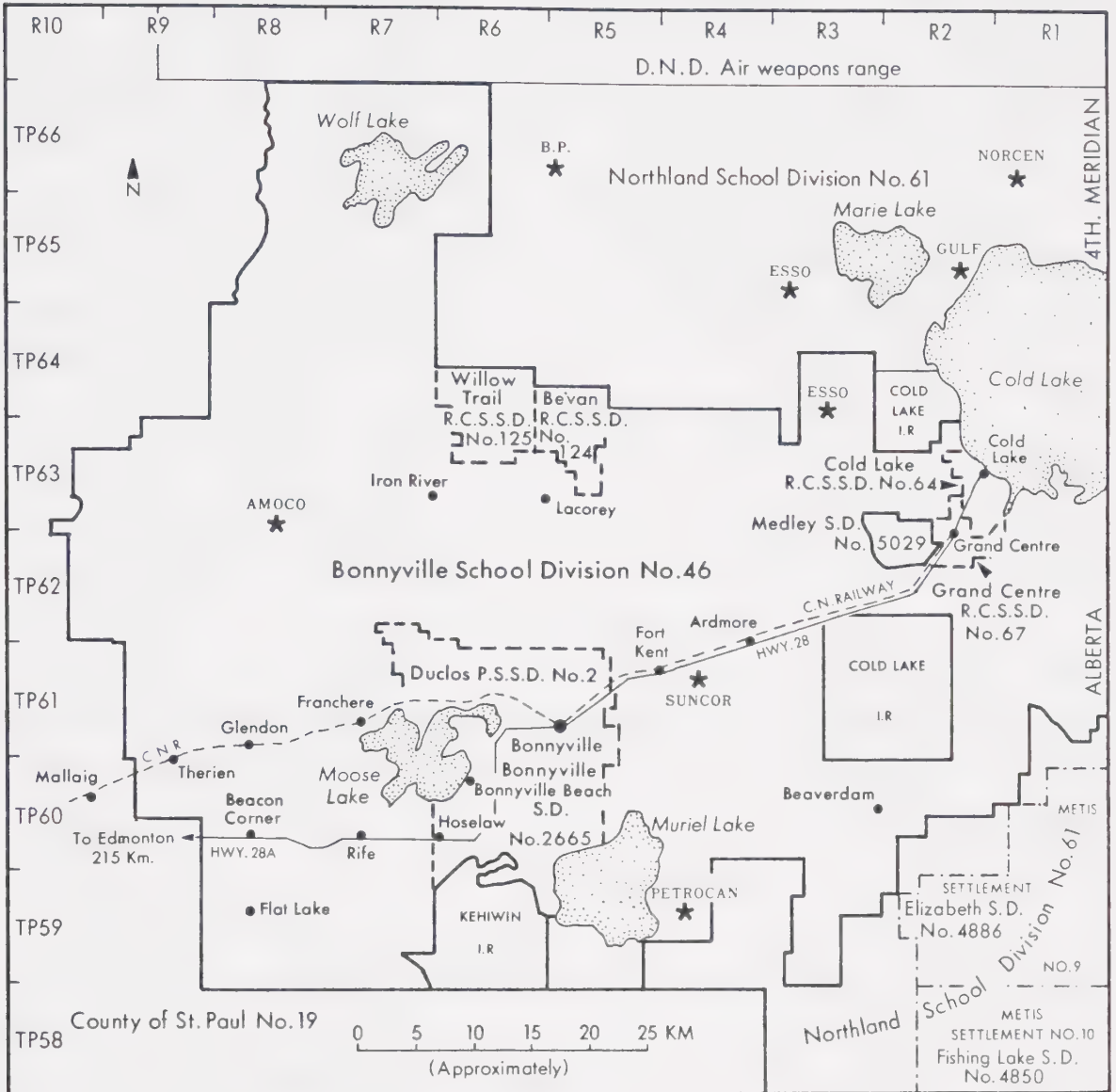
A. The School Jurisdictions 1912-1980

Within the area there were in 1979 nine school jurisdictions: 1, Bonnyville School District #2665; 2, Bonnyville School Division #46; 3, Cold Lake Roman Catholic Separate School District #64; 4, Grand Centre Roman Catholic Separate School District #67; 5, Bevan Roman Catholic Separate School District #124; 6, Willow Trail Roman Catholic Separate School District #127; 7, Northland School Division #61; and, 8, Bonnyville Regional High School District #4. In addition, the Duclos Protestant Separate School District #2 was an independent jurisdiction until its inclusion into Bonnyville School Division #46 in 1954⁴. The geographical areas of each jurisdiction are shown in Map #1. In this first part of the chapter each of these jurisdictions is described in turn.

Bonnyville School District #2665

The first white settlers in the Bonnyville area, Wilfred Ouimet and his family, arrived in 1907 (Girard, 1982:2). In the years immediately following other French-Canadian families arrived. Such migration, often sponsored by the Roman Catholic church was designed to

.....
⁴Through the remainder of the dissertation school jurisdictions will be referred to in abbreviated form, e.g. Bonnyville S.D. #2665.



MAP 1

SCHOOL JURISDICTIONS IN THE BONNYVILLE-COLD LAKE-GRAND CENTRE AREA OF ALBERTA PRIOR TO REORGANIZATION IN 1980

- Single school jurisdiction boundaries
- - - Boundary of Bonnyville school district No. 2665 and Separate school districts
- ★ Oil plant sites: actual and proposed

establish a French-Canadian presence in western Canada. Indicative of the tie these settlers felt between language, religion and culture, the first public building erected in the area was the original St.Louis parish log church. Father Bonny, the first resident Roman Catholic priest in Bonnyville had himself participated in the promotion in Quebec of emigration to the west .

The Philorum S.D. #2665, the forerunner of Bonnyville S.D. #2665, was established in 1912,⁵ and the school, situated approximately three kilometres west of Bonnyville, opened its doors to students on 13 February 1913. Growth was slow, but by October 1923 the trustees of District #2665 were meeting to discuss the establishment of a second classroom at the Philorum School.

In 1919 the Sisters of Evron arrived in Bonnyville and started a boarding school in association with their convent. An entry dated September 1922 in the *Sisters of Evron Chronicles* indicates an attendance of twenty-three boys and seven girls. Since the convent school was obviously more convenient than the Philorum school for children living in the village of Bonnyville, probably not all thirty children were boarders.

Apparently, local pressure was mounting on the Board of Trustees to build a school in the village. The following entry in the same *Chronicles* hints at the difficulties that confronted the trustees on this matter in the face of local disagreement: "There is talk of building a school and have sisters in charge, but there was some disagreement among the people." (Girard, 1982:545)

Early in the District's history, involvement by the Department of Education in school affairs is evident. By May 1925 difficulties over the building of a school in Bonnyville had reached the stage where the trustees turned to the Department and noted that "at meeting [16 May 1925] taxpayers could not come to an agreement, so we ask you to send a man to settle the difficulties." (Girard, 1982:546)

In September 1925 a village school was initially opened in an old hotel and entrusted to the Sisters of Evron. But life wasn't easy for the trustees who suffered a vote of no-confidence at the annual meeting of ratepayers 16 January 1926, only to have it withdrawn the next month. Accommodation problems also plagued the village school for the first ten years of its existence during which time it was housed in a number of different buildings, each of which was unsatisfactory. In February 1935, the trustees of District #2665 discussed the need for a

⁵Alberta Education Central Records file "Bonnyville S.D. #2665. Many of the details concerning District #2665 have been taken from Girard (ed), pp.545-552.

new school building, but by 1937 no progress had occurred.

Meanwhile, settlers in the western area of the District served by the Philorum school showed increasing dissatisfaction with District #2665 and were beginning to ask for their own school District. Clearly, by this time (1931), the village school with its four classes and 164 students was the centre of trustees' attention. The dominance of Bonnyville had been shown in 1928 when the District's name had been changed from Philorum to Bonnyville.

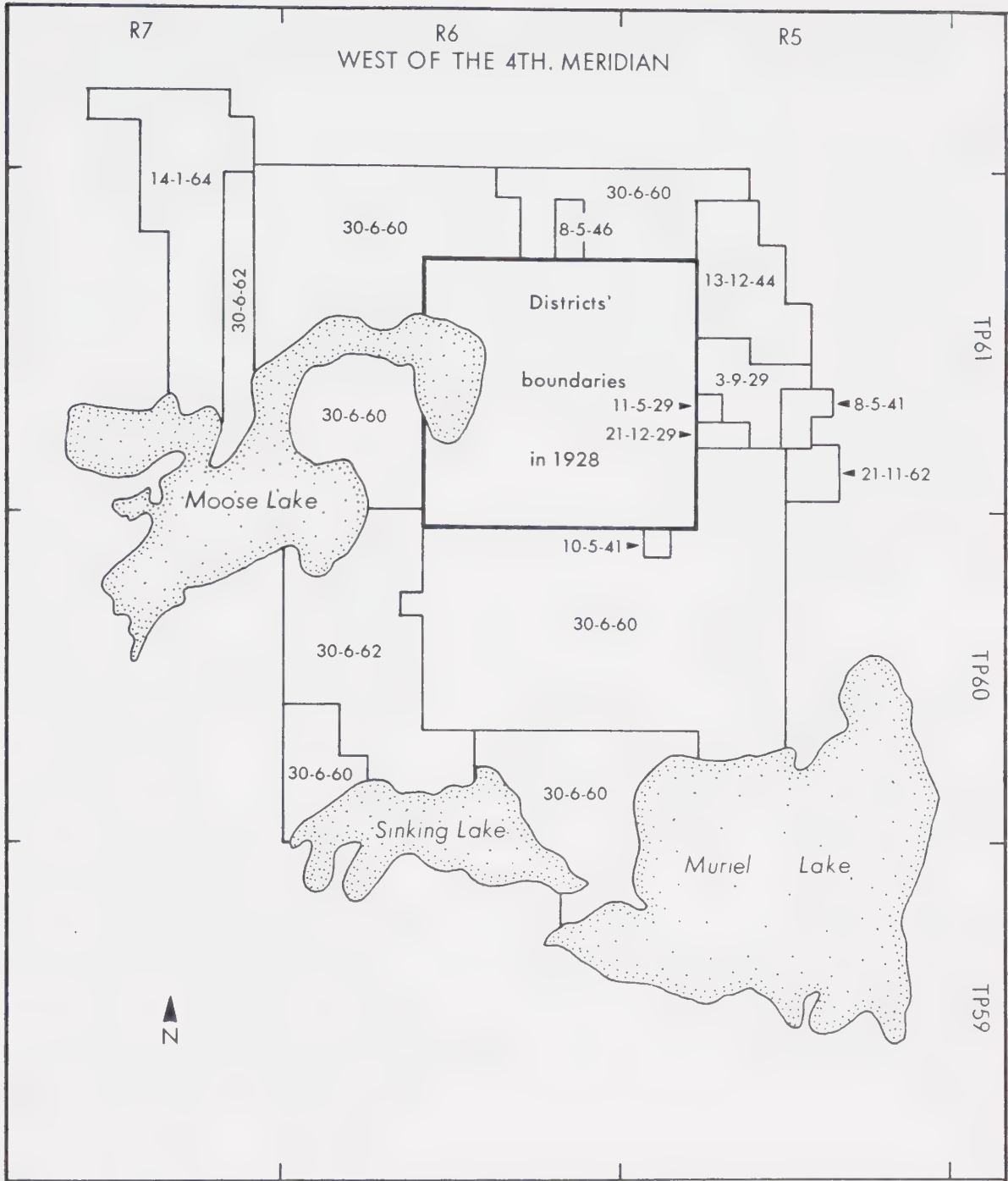
In 1937-38 a new school building was erected in Bonnyville and placed under the charge of the Assumption Sisters on the condition that they build a boarding facility and thus enable francophone-Catholic children residing too distant for daily travel into Bonnyville to attend the school. The Philorum rural school became an early casualty of centralization when it was closed in 1941.

School District boundaries assumed significance as early as December 1923 when an unsuccessful proposal was advanced to form a Bonnyville Consolidated School District #2665 by amalgamating Philorum S.D. #2665 and Durlingville S.D. #2664. In February 1936, following the announcement of provincial legislation to form school divisions, the ratepayers of District #2665 registered their opposition to inclusion in a large administrative unit. Accordingly, in 1939 when Bonnyville S.D. #46 was established, District #2665 exercised its right as a town district to remain independent of the new Division.

In 1928 District #2665 served an area of approximately fifty square kilometres in the immediate vicinity of Bonnyville, and over subsequent years its boundaries were periodically expanded in response to local political pressure. Map #2 details these boundary changes.⁶ Although minor adjustments were made in the 1920's and the 1940's, the major expansion of District #2665's boundaries occurred in 1960 and 1964, by which time the District served an area of almost 250 square kilometres.

While legally a public school District, the ratepayers of District #2665 were, until relatively recently, almost entirely Roman Catholic in religion and of French-Canadian descent. Their schools consequently reflected the close cultural relationship between language and religion. Throughout the history of the District there was a strong desire on the part of French-Catholics to protect their heritage. W. H. Swift commented on this in a 1972 Report on education in the Bonnyville area:

⁶Map #2 is based on data from Alberta Education Central Records file "Duclos P.S.S.D. #2."



MAP 2

EXPANSION OF THE BOUNDARIES OF DUCLOS P.S.S.D. NO.2
AND BONNYVILLE S.D. NO.2665
1928-1980



... there is one fact that predominates namely, the presence of a very considerable cohesive population of French ancestry who maintain a strong allegiance toward their mother tongue and towards the Roman Catholic religion.⁷

As one of the few pockets of francophone culture in Alberta, surrounded and threatened by assimilation into the dominant anglophone culture, the trustees of Bonnyville S.D. #2665 developed a very introspective and defensive posture toward their local school system. The late Dr. Bernard Brosseau, a trustee of District #2665 at the time of reorganization, epitomized this attitude. At the outset of the Sage study from which the reorganization proposal derives, he was quite determined that there should be no change to District #2665 and had so informed the Minister of Education. When Dr. Bryant Stringham, Director of the Sage Institute, went out to meet him and the Board of the District early in 1980, Dr. Brosseau is reported to have brought his family coat of arms to the meeting and pointed out with considerable feeling that he was an eighth generation Canadian who had as much right to his religion, language, and culture as did any others. He is reported to have vehemently warned Dr. Stringham not to interfere with District #2665.⁸

Throughout its history the Board of District #2665 was comprised entirely of persons of French-Canadian descent, and even in 1979 Board meetings were partially conducted in French.⁹ By the 1970's the five member Board consisted of self-employed professionals¹⁰ and a successful businessman-farmer. These trustees exercised considerable political sophistication in their approach to school affairs.

The District operated two schools, Notre Dame Elementary and Ecole Notre Dame, a junior high school. In September 1979, the District had a total enrolment of 721 students.¹¹ Both schools were widely acknowledged within the Bonnyville community to be very competently conducted. The per pupil expenditure in 1978 was \$1530, considerably lower than the provincial average of \$1955.¹²

⁷Dr. W. H. Swift, a former Deputy Minister of Education conducted an Inquiry into School Affairs in the Bonnyville area in November 1972 on behalf of the Minister of Education. The quotation is taken from his **Report and Recommendations (Swift Report)**, (1973) p.5.

⁸Interview with B. L. Stringham, 18 January 1984.

⁹Interview with B. Decoux, Acting Superintendent of Bonnyville S.D. #2665, 1979-80, 2 January 1984.

¹⁰Two doctors and a lawyer.

¹¹Sage Institute of Canada, **The Future of Education in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre Area of Alberta, 1980 (Sage Report)** p. 2.

¹²Sage Report, p.2.

Duclos Protestant Separate School District #2

The Duclos P.S.S.D. #2 had its foundations in a decision early in 1916 by a group of French-Canadian families to adopt the Presbyterian faith. Complicating their conversion to Protestantism at this time was the issue of the location of a new Roman Catholic church.

The original Roman Catholic log church was located in the Duclos area approximately three kilometres west of the present town of Bonnyville. When families who had settled in the Duclos area in 1912 decided to build a new Roman Catholic church, Wilfred Ouimet successfully petitioned Archbishop Legal to have the church sited in Bonnyville on five acres of land he had offered for the purpose. This decision seemingly generated considerable friction between the Duclos and Bonnyville communities.

Local historian H. E. Bourgoin¹³ has dismissed the suggestion that the adoption of Presbyterianism at this time by a number of Duclos families was directly related to the dispute over the location of the Roman Catholic church.

I'm sure those Catholic families near Duclos were disappointed when the Archbishop accepted Wilfred Ouimet's offer of five acres of land to build a new Catholic church in Bonnyville, but I believe those who converted wanted to know about the Presbyterian faith, and I have never heard from any of the converts that the decision to build a Catholic church in Bonnyville instead of Duclos was the direct cause of their conversion.¹⁴

A. J. Shandro has suggested that the story begins back in Quebec when a member of the Marcoux family of Ripon was greatly impressed by the quality of the preaching of French Presbyterian pastor Rev. C. R. Lapointe in a neighbouring village of Namur.¹⁵ Because of this, it is perhaps not surprising that the Marcoux family were among those emigrants "discontented with the religious leadership offered them" in Bonnyville.¹⁶

Although Rev. C. R. Lapointe could not accept the invitation of the converts to become their pastor, he referred them to a former classmate from Montreal Presbyterian College of Theology, Rev. John E. Duclos, then pastor of the Erskine church in Edmonton.

¹³Henri E. Bourgoin B.A.(Mc.Gill) of Bonnyville was teacher of Duclos school from its foundation in 1928 until 1948 when he transferred to the Glendon school from where he retired in 1963. He is of Huguenot descent and had been associated with Dr. Duclos in the Mission in Bonnyville from 1921.

¹⁴Bonnyville Nouvelle, 6 May 1980, p.16.

¹⁵A ten page mineographed history of the Duclos P.S.S.D.#2 by A. J. Shandro is in the Duclos file at Alberta Education Central Records. The article bears no date, but was likely written in the mid 1950's soon after the inclusion of Duclos P.S.S.D #2 into Bonnyville S. Div.#46.

¹⁶Shandro, p.2.

In response to a petition signed by forty-four persons, Dr. Duclos, a gifted orator and thoroughly bilingual, resigned from his Edmonton church at sixty-three years of age and "with dogged determination, and against the advice of his superiors, travelling by horse and buggy . . . organized a Protestant movement in Bonnyville."¹⁷

Initially, Dr. and Mrs. Duclos set up evening classes for the older children and adults of the congregation in the Duclos hospital building, but the severity of winter weather and the long distances some children had to travel resulted in a low attendance rate. The younger children continued to attend the bilingual Philorum school operated as a Catholic public school by District #2665. According to H. E. Bourgoin,¹⁸ Dr. Duclos became very concerned over the use of French language textbooks with Roman Catholic religious content and pictures. The children of the francophone Presbyterians who had left the Roman Catholic church were still being taught that faith in the public school. Dr. Duclos complained to the authorities arguing that under the School Act religious teaching was to be confined to the last thirty minutes of the school day in public schools. However, an inspector of schools indicated to Dr. Duclos the inability of the Department of Education to enforce such a regulation by commenting that to do so would require police to be stationed at the school door every day.¹⁹

The position adopted by the francophone Protestants was clearly stated in the following extract from a letter written in the early 1930's in answer to a query from a grain company which was being asked to apportion its taxes between Duclos P.S.S.D. #2 and Bonnyville S.D. #2665.

According to the School Act [Section]147.2 of the Province of Alberta, none other than the Lord's Prayer shall be recited in school [until the last 30 minutes of the day]. This ordinance was violated daily in the Philorum (French bilingual) school at Bonnyville and, inspite of frequent admonitions by the Protestant people and Government Department, the trustees allow teaching to go on with the same infraction of the law. Seeing that all attempt to remedy the situation was useless, the Protestants applied to the Minister of Education for the right of creating a separate school.²⁰

In an attempt to deal with this difficulty, Dr. Duclos had earlier in 1920 established two boarding houses in Edmonton and by arrangement with the Edmonton Public School District enabled the Protestant children to have regular schooling from September to June.

¹⁷Shandro, p. 2. The Presbytery in Winnipeg was initially opposed to the establishment of a mission at Bonnyville but finally gave its approval to the Rev. Duclos.

¹⁸Interview, 10 November 1983.

¹⁹H. E. Bourgoin, Interview, 10 November 1983.

²⁰quoted by Shandro, p.2.

Although the arrangement worked out reasonably well and schooling was advantageous to the children, it necessitated them being away from home for up to ten months of the year and thus not able to assist on the farms during either crop planting or harvesting. Probably for this reason a number of Protestant children continued to attend the Philorum school.

The solution to the problem appeared to be the establishment of a school in Bonnyville organized as a Protestant separate school. Despite initial opposition from the then Deputy Minister of Education, Mr. Ross,²¹ Duclos P.S.S.D.#2 was established on 11 October 1928.²² The Duclos school opened on 21 January 1929 under the direction of H. E. Bourgoïn with thirty-five pupils, twenty-two of whom resided in the Duclos District.

Through the support of the Women's Missionary Society of the United Church of Canada in Toronto, both a boys' and girls' boarding house were established near the Duclos hospital, west of the Bonnyville township. In addition to financing the purchase, renovation and operation of the homes, the Women's Missionary Society gave an annual grant of \$500 to the Board of Trustees of the Duclos School to pay for the education of non-resident pupils at the Duclos School. These residences provided for boarding pupils who lived too far from school, or pupils from outlying districts where no schools were in operation, or indeed, for any children in need of a home and school. Boarding fees were based on the financial means of the parents and, in a relatively disadvantaged part of the province, it was not uncommon for parents to be unable to pay at all.

While the Duclos children were predominantly of French descent, as was the Board of Trustees, the Duclos school was never bilingual. The desire was for a Protestant rather than a bilingual school, although H. E. Bourgoïn indicated that pressure did come from some French-Canadian Protestant parents for French to be taught. However, he argued:

I . . . was convinced that this would lower my standard and I realised that here in Alberta, especially among Protestant people, you earn your living in English, not in French. And so if you want French you will have to give me my leave of absence and get somebody else, because I refuse to lower my standard. I would waste time teaching in French while others in there would not want to take French. If they wanted French, they were speaking it at home and I felt that was enough of what they needed of French in Alberta.²³

²¹H. E. Bourgoïn, Interview.

²²At the time Duclos P.S.S.D.#2 was the only Protestant Separate School District west of Winnipeg. According to Mr. Bourgoïn, it was numbered 2 because the authorities did not wish its solitary status to be publicly known.

²³Interview.

The fact of having forty-two students spread over eight grades precluded teaching in both English and French. However, Bourgoin has stated:

[I] would have gladly taught it [French] if I had another teacher to help me so that the English element would be kept on par with all other schools.²⁴

The adoption of Protestantism appeared to make it more difficult for French-Canadians to maintain their language and culture. Assimilation of francophones into the dominant English-speaking culture was a major motivation of at least one trustee of Duclos P.S.S.D. #2. In 1941 he wrote to the Women's Missionary Society in Toronto in request of further funding for the Duclos School to enable needed extension of its classes to high school level:

Our school homes have played a most important part in Evangelizing and Anglicizing the foreign element. This educational work is not simply a church business but it is a national asset. In forty years the non-Anglo-Saxon will preponderate in Canada. The only way to maintain a prevailing British sentiment is to enlighten the people with the principles which constitute God's Kingdom of righteousness and to give the youth an education with the leaven of the Gospel in it.²⁵

Unfortunately, the minority francophone Protestants were engulfed by the anglophone tide. Only within the Bonnyville Roman Catholic community where francophones formed an overwhelming majority were they in a position to ward off anglophone assimilation.

In contrast to the attempted preservation of linguistic and religious homogeneity of the Bonnyville school, Shandro described the "melting-pot" heterogeneity of the Duclos school during the 1930's and 1940's:

It is the children attending Duclos school who make one realise the intrinsic value of it. Here were children of many races, creeds and cultures thrown together into one melting pot. Here were orphans and children from broken homes, children of "squatters" from the lakes area north of Bonnyville and children from unorganized areas whose parents took advantage of the school-home to provide their children with learning.²⁶

The need of the Duclos District for tax revenue became increasingly acute after 1940. But, in a predominantly Roman Catholic town, business establishments and industrial firms owned by Protestants had no wish to alienate the majority of their customers. Although the law indicated that private companies owned by Protestants were required to support the Protestant separate school, the attitude of the owners of such companies was simply stated by a lumber company owner's reply to the Duclos Board, "We certainly do not want to get into any dispute

²⁴Interview.

²⁵quoted by Shandro, p.4.

²⁶Shandro, p.9.

between the two school Districts."²⁷ For this reason, most firms paid their taxes to the public school system. Clearly it was then very difficult to persuade the public Board to relinquish funds to its arch rival. In fact, the town of Bonnyville decided that

It is our intention in future to pay all our taxes to the Bonnyville School District, and they, in turn, will pay you your just and lawful share.²⁸

Feelings between the Bonnyville and Duclos boards became further strained when Bonnyville #2665 chose not to allocate the funds on a per pupil basis. Rather, they argued that Duclos was entitled to receive local tax revenue only for the children who actually came from homes of Bonnyville ratepayers. In some years this numbered as few as five or six children out of an enrolment of forty. In addition, the Board of District #2665 argued that they provided all high school facilities for the town. Furthermore, the location of the Duclos school three kilometres west of the town resulted in numbers of Protestants paying residential taxes to and sending their children to the public school operated by Bonnyville S.D. #2665.

As was to recur in Bonnyville at a later date, the Duclos trustees found themselves in the position where court action would have been necessary in order to recover these taxes. In such an action they would need to convince a court as to the religion of a taxpayer. But as H. E. Bourgoïn pointed out:

... that's a law that's very difficult of application. Another thing, is that our Board's finances certainly never permitted the Board to go to such expense, especially not knowing what the outcome would be.²⁹

To intensify these financial difficulties, French-Canadian Protestants gradually moved out of the area and their farms were purchased by francophone Catholics; consequently, the income of the Duclos District was further reduced.

In the light of such a history, it is not difficult to agree with H. E. Bourgoïn's comment that "the relations[between Bonnyville S.D. #2665 and Duclos P.S.S.D. #2], to say the least, were strained. Let's put it that way."³⁰

The seeming inability of Department of Education officials to fully appreciate the significance of the difficulties between the Bonnyville Boards was reflected in the following suggestion made to the Duclos Board in the early 1940's:

If the insistence on its rights is likely to give rise to misunderstanding and friction in the community, your board might well consider the advisability of combining the

²⁷quoted by Shandro, p.6.

²⁸quoted by Shandro, p.6.

²⁹Interview.

³⁰Interview.

educational efforts of the whole community by uniting the separate school with the public school District.³¹

Such a suggestion by Department of Education administrators revealed little understanding of the historical context of the difficulties.

By 1953 the situation with Duclos had become unworkable. Since 1948 the school had had different teachers each year. This resulted in a lack of leadership and a decline in community confidence. Because of its location west of town, most Protestant residents paid taxes to the public School District #2665 to whose school they also sent their children. This inability to attract the total Protestant tax revenue was, in large measure, the cause of the District's financial difficulties.

To remedy the situation, the Duclos trustees resolved to seek inclusion into the Bonnyville School Division #46. In the light of this proposed action a number of Protestants considered changing their status from being Duclos supporters to District #2665 supporters on the assumption that free choice in the matter existed. While it would be pleased to increase its support, the Board of District #2665 became alarmed at the possibility that some of its less committed Catholic supporters may attempt to support Division #46 with their taxes. Clearly there was a need to regularize the situation.

To this effect, a public meeting of Protestant residents of Bonnyville-Duclos school District was called on 6 October 1953³² and addressed by W. H. Swift, Deputy Minister of Education. After considerable discussion, the meeting of 119 persons unanimously adopted a motion requesting the trustees of Duclos P.S.S.D.#2 to seek an inclusion agreement with Bonnyville School Division #46. Inclusion was the necessary means to obtaining Divisionally supplied public school education. Dissolution of the Separate School District would have meant returning to Bonnyville School District #2665, a public Catholic District. The continued existence of Duclos P.S.S.D.#2 was therefore necessary in order for its ratepayers to join Division #46. The Department of Education report of the meeting noted that:

The meeting was informed by the Deputy Minister, that he would interpret this motion as implying that the meeting did not want the District dissolved and that it recognized it must in future assume full responsibility for the education of Protestants in the District.

³¹Quoted by Shandro, p.6.

³²A detailed report of this meeting is filed with Duclos P.S.S.D #2 documents in Lakeland S.D.#5460 archives, Fort Kent school.

Thus, by inclusion, the Duclos P.S.S.D.#2 retained its geographic and legal identity, but placed all operational and most decision-making authority in the hands of the Bonnyville School Division #46. The inclusion agreement between Duclos P.S.S.D. #2 and Division #46, was given effect in an Order of the Minister of Education dated 7 January 1954.

The agreement was, in retrospect, legally very untidy. The Deputy Minister had referred in the 6 October meeting to the separate school assuming "full responsibility for the education of Protestants in the District." Yet, how could an organization carry "full responsibility" for something over which it no longer retained operational control and decision-making powers? Who really carried the legal responsibility, Duclos P.S.S.D.#2 or Bonnyville School Division #46? The question also arises as to the powers of the Minister of Education in changing the status of separate school Districts, especially in the light of Section 17 of the *Alberta Act*.³³ Confusion over the legal status of Duclos P.S.S.D.#2 following inclusion into Division #46 was still of concern as late as January 1980 when the superintendent of the Division wrote to Alberta Education seeking clarification regarding the ownership of the Duclos property and the proposed new Bourgoin school in Bonnyville.³⁴ This unusual situation in which a separate school district retained its legal identity after inclusion into a school division was not directly addressed in any Alberta legislation.

Although Duclos P.S.S.D.#2 was founded by the small francophone Protestant community,³⁵ with the growth of Bonnyville's population control passed to anglophones by the late 1930's. By the 1970's the original French-Canadian Protestant families had almost all moved away from the Bonnyville area and District #2 ceased to have any francophone influence. Rather, the Board was now controlled by people who not only tended to be anti-francophone, but also desired that religion and the observance of religious holidays be excluded from the school.

Accordingly, on 15 June 1955 the Duclos Board, exercising those powers relating to language and religious instruction allowed to local district boards within divisional jurisdictions, passed the following resolutions:

³³See Appendix E.

³⁴Correspondence from G. Kuschminder to W. Duke (Director of Finance, Statistics and Legislation, Alberta Education), 24 January 1980.

³⁵Until January 1933, the Minutes of the Duclos P.S.S.D.#2 were written in French. The original minute book is in the archives of Lakeland S.D. #5460 presently housed in the Fort Kent school. It is possibly the only example of its kind in the Province.

1. That the English language be taught throughout the school. . .
2. That . . . the school be opened only with the recitation of the Lord's Prayer or if there be any dissention that it be omitted entirely.
3. That no religious instruction whatsoever be permitted during school hours. That . . . only the holidays agreed upon in the School Act, being statutory or proclaimed, be allowed.³⁶

Clearly, the conception of the school as embodied in the above resolutions was, on each point, in conflict with that espoused by Bonnyville S.D.#2665. At least one influential trustee strongly represented these opinions on the Board of Division #46.

Under Divisional control the Duclos school was re-established in a new facility in Bonnyville, but throughout most of the period after 1954 the school experienced a range of problems that caused it to be unfavourably compared with the Notre Dame school of District #2665. For example, in March 1962, the board complained that:

it seems we do lack teacher co-operation, pupil discipline and we do not in the history of Duclos have one pupil graduate with sufficient credits and a basic average for university entrance.³⁷

However, in August 1966, the superintendent of Division #46 blamed low enrolments and low school morale for the poor standing of the school. He went on to comment:

It is my considered opinion therefore that the Duclos School Board not only accomplishes nothing, but actually harms the total educational situation when it calls meetings to complain about and deride at staff or more particularly when it attempts to interfere with the internal aspects of the school . . . The only result of Board members gathering with preconceived ideas of how they will "set the principal straight" is insecurity on the part of the staff. This fosters poor morale . . .³⁸

Given such turmoil, it is not surprising that through the 1950's and 1960's the contrasting quality of the two Bonnyville schools became a matter of public knowledge and was the foundation of the popular belief that exists to the present that the Notre Dame schools are in some measure superior to the public system schools in Bonnyville.

Bonnyville School Division #46

Bonnyville School Division #46 was created by Order of the Minister of Education on 7 September 1939 on the basis of the 1936 provincial legislation permitting amalgamation of rural school districts into divisions. Under the legislation, town and separate districts could opt to

³⁶Minutes of Duclos P.S.S.D. #2, 15 June 1955. Archives of Lakeland S.D.#5460, Fort Kent school.

³⁷Minutes of Special Meeting of Duclos School Board, 21 March 1962.

³⁸Report to the Duclos School Board by R. G. Fast, August 1966.

remain independent. Both Bonnyville S.D. #2665 and Duclos P.S.S.D. #2 chose to do so. All other school districts within the area of Townships 59 to 66 and Ranges 1 to 10 west of the 4th. meridian, with the single exception of Medley School District #5029, were included in Division #46.

Within this area were situated over seventy school districts. Under the legislation, the local district structure remained but the duties and responsibilities of district school boards were reduced to three specific areas. They could determine the type and extent of religious instruction in the school and whether French instruction would be provided. Also they could nominate teachers (Giles, 1978:52). These provisions were utilized by the Duclos School Board in its 1955 resolution dealing with language and religion in the school.

Within the Bonnyville School Division #46, these powers were of significance not only to Duclos P.S.S.D. #2 but also to LaCorey and Fort Kent School Districts. Within both these Districts, a majority of the residents were French-speaking and Roman Catholic in religion.

The francophone-Catholic settlers in the LaCorey area, many of whom had emigrated from Quebec during the first half of the twentieth century under various church sponsored migration schemes, sought to retain a way of life that revolved around the church and the school. Thus, in 1941, Father Leo Thibault succeeded in obtaining the services of the Sisters of the Assumption to teach at the LaCorey school under Bonnyville School Division #46 administration.³⁹

A major reason for the organizing of school divisions was to achieve the benefits of cost efficiency and to allow better programs to be offered. However, little centralization appears to have taken place in this area during the 1940's, but by 1951 Division #46 was moving to centralize its school services.⁴⁰ In 1955 the small district schools in the north western part of the Division were centralized at Iron River. However, due to a desire by local francophones to protect their linguistic and religious heritage, the LaCorey school was allowed to remain independent in its operation.

When the LaCorey school was finally closed in 1963, as a result of declining enrolments, those parents who lived within the LaCorey School District boundaries were able to arrange to have Division #46 bus their children to the Notre Dame school of Bonnyville School District #2665. However, francophone children living outside the District boundaries were

³⁹Iron River- LaCorey History Committee, *Coal Oil to Crude*(1980), p.536.

⁴⁰e.g. Rife and Hoselaw schools were centralized to Glendon in 1951 (Kissel, 1980).

bused by the Division to the Fort Kent school (see Map #1) which, at that stage, was the French-Catholic school of the Bonnyville School Division.

The Fort Kent area was also francophone and Catholic. In 1938 Father Connoir, who had founded the Fort Kent Roman Catholic parish in 1922, invited the Sisters of the Holy Cross to teach at the Fort Kent school (Girard, 1982:532). Under the administration of Bonnyville S.Div. #46, they remained until 1971 providing a school environment in which both French and Religious Instruction were valued.

By the late 1950's, schooling within the Division had been centralized at seven locations: Ardmore, Cold Lake, Bonnyville, Fort Kent, Glendon, Grand Centre and Iron River. The total enrolment was approximately 2500 students of which sixty percent travelled to school by bus. Later, the establishment of Bonnyville Centralized High School jointly with District #2665 enabled the Division to centralize high school education from Ardmore, Fort Kent, and Iron River in Bonnyville. The Division continued to provide high school education at Glendon in the west and at Grand Centre in the east. The building of Grand Centre High School in 1969-70, in collaboration with Medley School District #5029, resulted in the cessation of Divisional high school education in Cold Lake.

Division #46 had five sub-divisions each of which elected a trustee: Ardmore, Glendon, Iron River, Duclos-Fort Kent and Cold Lake-Grand Centre. By the late 1970's, provision had been made for a sixth trustee position to represent rapidly growing Grand Centre.

Under the sub-divisional arrangement school communities were represented by a specific trustee. While this arrangement possessed the advantage of close contact between ratepayers and the sub-division trustee, it also had serious deficiencies. Planning on a system-wide basis was difficult since each trustee had a primary concern to protect and promote the schools in his subdivision.⁴¹ The minute books for the 1960's and 1970's reveal many examples of situations where one or two trustees fought against particular proposals that were viewed as unfavourable to the interests of their supporters but supported by the majority of trustees. The superintendent of Division #46 during the years 1957-59, H. A. MacNeil, considered that difficulties within the Division were greater than those between the Division and District #2665.

⁴¹No female was ever elected a trustee of Division #46.

The political problems were, I think, greater within the Division than between Bonnyville [#2665] and the Division. It was the ends like Glendon who had a representative on the Board who watched like a hawk and anything that Fort Kent got, they got.⁴²

For much of its existence Bonnyville S.Div.#46 experienced financial difficulties. It had a low tax base because prior to the 1970's the area lacked industry and much of the agricultural land was of marginal quality.⁴³ In 1971, a Department of Education official had described Division #46 in the following terms:

The Bonnyville School Division #46 serves an area of marginal settlement in Alberta which is fairly remote from the main centres of population and which possesses a number of people belonging to minority populations, as well as people who are in areas of cultural deprivation when compared to the basic standards for adequate functioning in a modern school system.⁴⁴

Considerable costs were involved in operating a fleet of forty-four contracted school buses.⁴⁵ Also, local political pressures required the Division to provide programs that were not cost efficient. The low tax base is evident in the Division's 1978 per pupil assessment of \$6770 compared with a provincial average of \$18300.⁴⁶ In 1974 supplementary requisitions based on a rate of 12.9 mills represented only 4.4% of the Division's operating income of \$3.2 million. By 1979, with a supplementary requisition rate increased to 31.24 mills, these represented 11.1% in an operating income of \$6.3 million.⁴⁷

Centralization in the 1950's had involved the building of larger schools at Fort Kent, Ardmore, Cold Lake and adding to the Glendon school. However, the day labour system that was used in building the schools allowed uncontrolled cost escalation at a time when local requisition payments were withheld because accounts of Bonnyville Municipal District #87 had been garnisheed by its creditors. Dr. MacNeil has indicated that "it was touch and go whether or not they [the provincial government] would do away with the Board in 1957 and put an official trustee in charge of the District."⁴⁸ Financial difficulties continued to beset the administrators and trustees who led the Division through the 1960's and 70's.⁴⁹

⁴²Interview with Dr. H. MacNeil, 12 December 1983. Fort Kent was predominantly francophone while Glendon was heavily Ukrainian.

⁴³Interview with Mr. S. Skuba, superintendent of Division #46 1970-1979, 3 November 1983.

⁴⁴Memorandum, K. T. McKie, Supervisor of Special Education to E. J. M. Church, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, 10 February 1971.

⁴⁵Sage Report, p. 3.

⁴⁶Sage Report, p.3.

⁴⁷Annual Financial Report of Alberta School Jurisdictions (Alberta Education) 1974, 1979.

⁴⁸Interview, 12 December 1983.

⁴⁹As late as 1978 the Division had a deficit of \$300,000 in a total budget of \$5

Cold Lake Roman Catholic Separate School District #64

Separate School District #64 was established within the town boundaries of Cold Lake on 1 April 1957.⁵⁰ Throughout its existence it operated only one school, St. Dominic's, which provided for pupils from grades one to twelve. In 1968 the enrolment totalled 299 including 119 non-resident pupils (25 from Bonnyville S.Div. #46, 12 from Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D. #67, 8 from Elizabeth Metis Colony #9 and 74 Treaty Indians from the Cold Lake Indian Reserve). By 1975-76 the enrolment had dropped to 219 with 77 nonresident pupils (20 from Division #46, 23 from Elizabeth Metis Colony #9 and 34 Treaty Indians). Enrolment had increased by 1979 to 266, due largely to a growth in the population of the town of Cold Lake.⁵¹

This small enrolment spread over twelve grades, together with the social and economic diversity of the students, constituted a continuing problem for the District. The difficulty was commented upon in a report by a team of inspectors who visited the school in May 1970:

This school faces many hardships because of its small size, limited facilities, crowded accommodation and a very varied student population. It cannot provide the wide choice of elective subjects which these students need, such as business education, home economics, industrial arts, and arts and crafts.⁵²

The trustees of Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D. #64 were characterized by one former local administrator as insular and unsophisticated in their thinking and very suspicious of the Department of Education.⁵³ Mostly they were people engaged in skilled and semi-skilled occupations and often appeared to rely on the parish priest to provide professional leadership. Until the 1970's the priest was often Secretary-Treasurer of the board. The minutes suggest that this relationship was not without its difficulties. At a Board meeting in March 1959 it was found necessary to pass a vote of confidence confirming Father Champaign as "the official representative in matters pertaining to school management, discipline or any other matters pertaining to school and staff and public recreations . . ."⁵⁴

From time to time during the 1960's and 1970's there were demands for the teaching of French in the school, but there appeared to have been very little demand within the District for bilingual education. In the late 1950's the Board supported the teaching of French by the

⁴⁹(cont'd) million.

⁵⁰"Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D. #64" file, Alberta Education Central Records.

⁵¹Principal's report, 1968, 1976.

⁵²Report by L. W. Kunelius, Inspector of High Schools, on behalf of the Visitation Team, 8 May 1970, "Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D. #64's file, Alberta Education Central Records.

⁵³Interview.

⁵⁴Minutes Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D. #64, 9 March 1959.

following resolution:

That our St.Dominic's school of Cold Lake be known and operated as bilingual to the full extent possible in the circumstances as permitted by the Alberta School Act and as requested by the will of the parents.⁵⁵

However, little practical effect appears to have flowed from this resolution passed in April 1958, for although many Roman Catholics in Cold Lake were of French-Canadian descent, most of them by the 1950's had been assimilated into the dominant English language culture. There is no evidence that the policy was ever seriously implemented and, by the 1970's, the school had dropped any pretence of being bilingual.⁵⁶

Economically, "the survival of Cold Lake has been from its natural attributes, the forests, fish, agriculture and oil," although oil has been of importance only recently. (Skarsen, n.d., preface). Reliance on such economic activities did not provide a strong tax base and the resultant low assessments are shown in the 1978 figures of \$5443 per pupil in Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D. #64 compared with a provincial average of \$18300.⁵⁷ Consequently, the District tended to keep a tight control on expenditure. In 1978 it showed an expenditure of \$1490 per pupil contrasted with a provincial average of \$1995. As a result of fiscal restraint the District had actually accumulated a considerable financial surplus by the time of reorganization in 1980.⁵⁸ However, programs in the school were limited and facilities in need of upgrading.

The District's relations with Bonnyville S.Div. #46 were commonly described by interviewees as very good.⁵⁹ There was a tuition agreement with the Division which also provided bussing for a number of its students to attend St.Dominic's. Probably the major failure in co-operation concerned the provision of a possible bi-campus (in Cold Lake) or multicampus (including the old Grand Centre High School) approach to high school education by District #64 and Division #46.

Despite some cautious negotiations in the early months of 1969, when Division #46 decided in March 1969⁶⁰ to centralize its high school programs in Grand Centre, and with federal financial support through Medley S.D.#5029, to build a new high school, the multi-campus idea involving St.Dominic's also died. Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64 was left with

⁵⁵Minutes Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D. #64, 14 April 1958.

⁵⁶The Minutes for the early 1960's suggest that Sister Thomas, the principal of St. Dominic's, struggled to retain the teaching of French.

⁵⁷Sage Report, p.4.

⁵⁸Annual Financial Report of Alberta School Jurisdictions, 1980.

⁵⁹Interviews with L. Bujold, A. Edstrom, S. Skuba.

⁶⁰Minutes Bonnyville S.Div.#46, 28 March 1969.

the choice of withdrawing from high school education and sending its students to the Division's high school in Grand Centre or struggling on alone at the high school level despite inadequate facilities and programming. District #64 chose the latter.

Grand Centre Roman Catholic Separate School District #67

Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67 was established in May 1957.⁶¹ Its boundaries were coterminous with the Grand Centre municipal District. Like Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64, it too was a one school system operating Assumption grade K-9 school with an enrolment, in 1979, of 211.⁶² Although its 1978 equalized assessment per pupil of \$6933 was a little higher than was that for Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D. #64, it remained much less than the provincial average of \$18300. Likewise, its 1978 per pupil expenditure of \$1638 was also less than the provincial average of \$1955.⁶³ The District was then slightly better off than its counterpart in Cold Lake, especially since it was not attempting to provide high school education.

During the 1960's, District #67 had struggled to resolve a number of matters, one of which was the place of the French language in the school. In 1963, at the time when the District was building its own school, the Board received an angry petition from ratepayers opposed to the teaching of French in the school. The matter led to the calling of a public meeting of District ratepayers at which the possibility of seeking inclusion within Bonnyville S.Div.#46 was advanced. However, Father Poulin spoke strongly against the idea and defended the need of a separate school "for the complete and Catholic education of our children. . ."⁶⁴

In May 1965 the issue of language surfaced again with a petition by thirty-four families that French be taught and that religious instruction be given in French. Following a public meeting over the matter in June 1965, the Grand Centre Board decided in a split vote to delay the introduction of oral French until 1966 "when it will be studied again."⁶⁵ Finally, following a request from Sister Thomas, the principal of Assumption, who argued that oral French was needed in grades one to six to prepare children for the subject at junior high level, the Board agreed in a three-one vote with one absention, to allow oral French in grades one to six for

⁶¹"Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D. #67" file, Alberta Education Central Records.

⁶²Sage Report, p.4.

⁶³Sage Report, p. 4.

⁶⁴Minutes of a Special Meeting of Ratepayers of Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D. #67, 23 April 1963.

⁶⁵Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 15 July 1965.

three fifteen minute periods per week.⁶⁶ From that time oral French was part of the curriculum.

High school students from the District were able to attend either St. Dominic's at Cold Lake or the Grand Centre High School. Since the Board had tuition agreements with both Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D. #64 and Bonnyville S.Div.#46⁶⁷, the choice of school remained largely a matter for individual families. Although St. Dominic's was the school of a sister Catholic jurisdiction, the better facilities and broader program offering, together with reasons of inter-town rivalry, resulted in most Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67 students attending Grand Centre High School for their high school education.

Based on documentary and interview data, it would appear that the trustees of Grand Centre #67 were more capable and sophisticated in operating their school than their counterparts in Cold Lake, but like them, were also suspicious of the provincial Department of Education. Their less conservative approach was indicated in them being the driving force in a plan to employ their own superintendent in conjunction with Cold Lake, rather than purchasing the services of the superintendent of Bonnyville S.D.#2665 as had been the practice since 1970. Prior to that time, the provincially appointed superintendent of Division #46 provided such services.

Bevan Roman Catholic Separate School Division #124

In 1969 a small group of parents within Bevan S.D.#4933 undertook to form a Roman Catholic separate school district in order that their children would be able to attend the Notre Dame schools in Bonnyville. On 15 December 1969, of the fifteen eligible Roman Catholic ratepayers in the Bevan S.D., only seven participated in a plebiscite seeking to establish a separate school district.⁶⁸ Thus, exercising a right entrenched in the **Alberta Act 1905**, Section 17, these seven were able to form a satellite separate school district, which was established on 1 January 1970.⁶⁹ Immediately, the new three member Board negotiated a tuition and transportation agreement with Bonnyville S.D.#2665 as per Section 178 of the **School Act**, 1970. Mr. G. Ouellette Secretary-Treasurer of Bonnyville S.D. #2665 was also appointed

⁶⁶Minutes of the Board of Trustees, 12 September 1967.

⁶⁷**Sage Report**, p. 4.

⁶⁸All seven participants cast their votes in favour of the proposal to establish a separate school district.

⁶⁹"Bevan R.C.S.S.D. #125" file, Alberta Education Central Records.

Secretary-Treasurer of Bevan R.C.S.S.D. #124. The Board failed to appoint a superintendent as required under the School Act, although there is no evidence that it had been exempted from so doing by the Minister.

The agreement provided that transportation to Bonnyville was the responsibility of District #2665 thus requiring its buses to travel through areas where Division #46 was the bussing authority. U. R. Shogren, a provincial Field Administrative Officer, seemed to express the Department of Education view when he wrote to G. Ouellette:

At the moment we are rather at a loss to understand why the Board failed to pass a resolution to enter into a transportation agreement with the Bonnyville School Division #46. It appears to us that there may be duplicate bussing involved which through the making of other suitable arrangements might well be avoided.

However, both Districts saw advantages in the agreement. Bevan #124 ratepayers were now able to send their children to the Notre Dame schools in Bonnyville while Bonnyville District #2665 was able to claim provincial grants for these children. In addition, District #2665 could now seemingly send their buses into Division territory. This represented a further expansion of the District's attendance area and opened the possibility of providing bussing for Division #46 students en route who wished to attend Notre Dame schools in Bonnyville.

Willow Trail Roman Catholic Separate School District #125

On 19 August 1970 a small group of Roman Catholic ratepayers of Willow Trail S.D. #4675 within Bonnyville S.Div. #46 met with Dr. B. Stringham, then Director of Legislation and Field Administration, concerning the refusal of Bonnyville #46 to bus their children to the Notre Dame schools of Bonnyville S.D. #2665. Division #46 had assigned these children to the Iron River school.⁷⁰ Following the meeting, Dr. Stringham wrote to one of the parents, S. Chachula, on 25 August 1970:

. . . As was indicated to you on that date, decisions in the matter of transportation rest entirely with the Board of the Bonnyville School Division. I would encourage you to continue to approach your councillor with regard to your problem and work with him regarding a mutually satisfactory solution to the problem. I am sure you will agree that the alternative you mentioned whereby your pupils would be denied an education if you kept them at home is not in the best interests of your pupils . . .⁷¹

⁷⁰Although not documented, it would appear that Bevan R.C.S.S.D. #124 ratepayers had been confronted with a similar problem. There is little doubt that District #2665 encouraged and supported the formation of both these Separate Districts.

⁷¹Correspondence B. L. Stringham, Director of Legislation and Field Administration to S. Chachula, 25 August 1970.

But, no doubt with the example of their Catholic neighbours in the adjacent Bevan School District before them, the group decided to dispense with any further efforts to deal with Bonnyville S.Div. #46 and to create their own separate school district.

Mrs. Chachula replied to Dr. Stringham, in the following terms:

... we would like to express our thanks to you for taking a personal interest, and also to advise you that in order that we would be able to solve our problem, we are in the process of forming a separate school District in our area.⁷²

Therefore on 21 September 1970, six of the ten Roman Catholic ratepayers in the Willow Trail School District voted in favour of establishing a separate district. No other votes were cast. The Willow Trail R.C.S.S.D. #125 was thus established on 1 October 1970 and entered into a tuition and transportation agreement with Bonnyville S.D.#2665. As was the case with Bevan R.C.S.S.D. #124, Bonnyville S.D. #2665 undertook to "provide transportation at its own cost for the children in the said District, and deliver them to the school(s) in Bonnyville as specified by the party of the second part [i.e. Willow Trail R.C.S.S.D. #125]".⁷³

Again Bonnyville S.D.#2665 was committing itself to sending a bus through Bonnyville S.Div.#46 territory. The portents of later problems can be sensed in the handwritten memo U. R. Shogren sent to Dr. Stringham after reviewing the Willow Trail R.C.S.S.D. #125 agreement with Bonnyville S.D. #2665:

I think this agreement is satisfactory with the exception of 1(d) which I am inclined to question on the basis of the assumption that it means duplicate bussing. Whether or not such should be permitted is of course wholly dependent on government policy.⁷⁴

As with the agreement between Bonnyville #2665 and Bevan #124, Shogren, an experienced administrator, was uneasy over the implications for future bussing in the area.

As was also the case with Bevan R.C.S.S.D.#124, Willow Trail R.C.S.S.D. #125 was created under provisions in the *Alberta Act* and the *School Act* that guarantee the right of a Roman Catholic (or Protestant) minority to form a separate school district. However, the creation of both Districts was a means to enable Catholic children in Division #46 territory to attend District #2665 schools in Bonnyville. Both legally and administratively the existence of such satellite districts created problems for the administration of educational services in the area.

⁷²Mrs. S. Chachula to B. L. Stringham, 31 August 1970.

⁷³Tuition and Transportation Agreement between Bonnyville S.D. #2665 and Willow Trail R.C.S.S.D. #125, clause 1(d), 29 December 1970.

⁷⁴Memorandum U. R. Shogren to B. L. Stringham, December 1970.

Medley School District #5029

Medley S.D.#5029 is the District associated with the Cold Lake Air Force Base. In 1979 it had an enrolment of approximately 1000 students in grades one to nine. The high school students have attended Grand Centre high school since 1969 through a tuition agreement with Bonnyville S. Div. #46. The agreement involved a federal grant of \$800,000 toward the construction costs of Grand Centre high school.

The District is financed entirely by federal and provincial grants and, since it chose to remain independent of the 1980 reorganization, it is of marginal significance to this study. Interview data suggests that the District is self-contained, and has minimal interaction with surrounding jurisdictions, although its superintendent and Board have always taken a keen interest in the operation of the Grand Centre High School.

Northland School Division #61

Areas both to the north and along the south east boundary of Bonnyville S.Div.#46 fell under the control of Northland S.Div.#61 due to the latter's unique mandate to include not only organized school districts but all lands north of Township 55 which were not within any other school jurisdiction (See Map #1). Along the south east boundary of Division #46 were Elizabeth and Fishing Lake school Districts which related to Metis Colonies #9 and #10. The unorganized area between the northern boundary of Bonnyville S.Div.#46 and the Department of National Defence Air Weapons Range was of significance because it contained the location of the proposed Esso oil-sands plant.

Although areas that were under the control of Northland S.Div.#61 were affected by the 1980 reorganization of school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area, Northland Division took virtually no part in the planning or implementation process of reorganization. Its official representative on the Ministerial Advisory Committee, attended only the first meeting of the Committee. Negotiations tended to take place directly with the people of Metis Colonies #9 and #10 rather than through Northland S.Div.#61. Therefore, it too was of marginal significance to the study.

Bonnyville Regional School District #4

Bonnyville R.S.D. #4 was established in May 1973 ⁷⁵ following the 1972 Swift Inquiry and the resolute intervention of the then Minister of Education, L. D. Hyndman.⁷⁶ The Regional District provided the legal structure for the joint operation of Bonnyville Centralized High School (Ecole Secondaire de Bonnyville) by both Bonnyville S.Div.#46 and Bonnyville S.D. #2665. The Board of the Regional District comprised three trustees appointed from each of the partner Boards.

In September 1979 the school's enrolment was 501.⁷⁷ Approximately sixty percent of students came from the Division and forty percent from the District. However, supplementary costs incurred in the operation of the school were shared equally between the two Boards. basis.⁷⁸

As the operation of the high school constituted a major conflictual issue between District #2665 and Division #46, the fuller account of the District is given in the second part of this chapter.

B. Conflictual Themes

Issues of conflict have been present from very early in the history of school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville area. In this section, six major conflictual issues that were manifest in the decade 1969-79 are discussed thematically. These issues concern religion; language and ethnicity; tax assessment; boundaries and transportation; Bonnyville Centralized High School; and inter-town rivalry. These were, in fact, always interrelated and therefore no attempt has been made to evaluate their specific order of importance. As suggested by the data, individuals tended to variously stress some issues more than others and revealed considerable variation in perspective.

⁷⁵"Bonnyville Regional School District #4" file, Alberta Education Central Records.

⁷⁶The Minister proposed to order the establishment of a Regional School District unless the two boards came to a mutually acceptable agreement. Memorandum L. D. Hyndman to E. K. Hawksworth, Deputy Minister of Education, 19 March 1973.

⁷⁷Sage Report, p.1.

⁷⁸Swift Report, pp.9,18.

Religion

Historically, religion in the school was the first issue that generated conflict in the Bonnyville area. It was still a major arena of controversy during the decade under discussion.

The effect of the withdrawal of the Sisters of the Holy Cross from the Fort Kent school in 1971 was a matter of considerable concern to Catholic parents. Morris Ross, speaking on behalf of the Fort Kent Local Advisory School Board to the Swift Inquiry, stated that in the past

. . . the administrative body [Division #46] in close communication with the people and the religious leaders of the community, made it a point to appoint teachers who could serve best the population . . . This is why most teachers were French and Catholic. In this way . . . it was possible to continue the family education, which is basically French and Catholic, not as a separate subject in an already crowded curriculum but as an integrated force . . .⁷⁹

The withdrawal of the Sisters from Fort Kent was not precipitated by Division #46, although some parents appeared to lay the blame in that direction. However, a former Superintendent of #46 was very clear when asked whether it had been Division policy to withdraw the nuns from Fort Kent:

It certainly wasn't. It was a thing of the times. Most of the nuns from a number of areas were [being] centred in Falher, Morinville, the real French areas . . . It is a fact that at one time Fort Kent teachers were eighty percent nuns. As time went on a number of nuns left and they finally closed the residences. The people panicked. What is Bonnyville School Div. doing to us? They're removing our nuns . . . Shortly after . . . the last two remaining nuns left Fort Kent and the problem further magnified. Look what the Bonnyville School Division has done to us. They have got rid of our last hope. Then there was more pressure to bring them into Bonnyville.⁸⁰

According to "off the record" comments by a number of interviewees, one source of this pressure was the church authorities in Bonnyville who seemingly no longer viewed Fort Kent as the French-Catholic school of the Bonnyville S.Div. and encouraged people to attend the Catholic public schools of District #2665. By this time Fort Kent had ceased to be an independent parish and (a) as it was held that school attendance boundaries ought to correspond to parish boundaries and (b) Fort Kent was only nine kilometers from Bonnyville, it could be expected that the church may exert some pressure. On the other hand, there were and are Catholics in Fort Kent who consider the economic survival of their hamlet to be of greater significance than having their children attend a Catholic school.

To many members of the francophone community the protection and development of their Catholic religion was a key to the survival of their language and culture. Dr. B. Brosseau

⁷⁹Swift Inquiry (1972), *Transcript of Proceedings*, p.267.

⁸⁰S. Skuba, Interview.

in speaking to the 1972 Swift Inquiry, linked "my French identity and my Catholic religion."⁸¹ In response to a request from the St. Louis Parish Council (Bonnyville) in June 1970, "to make the subject of religion in school attractive, interesting, practical and compulsory for all Catholic students at all grade levels," the trustees of District #2665 offered their "full co-operation."

The importance of a "Catholic atmosphere" within a school was referred to by several interviewees, and the submission by the St. Louis Parish Council to the Sage Inquiry expressed the need for "a living Catholic atmosphere" intended to pervade every aspect of school life. It is on this issue that the contrast between the Catholic confessional view of the school and public "melting-pot" view is most clearly drawn. It would appear that many of the difficulties that Division #46 faced in the Fort Kent area, which are discussed later in this dissertation, can be attributed to the changed nature of the Fort Kent school by the beginning of the 1970's. Due to changes in the area's demography and the withdrawal of religious Sisters from the school, the school ceased to reflect a francophone-Catholic milieu and took on characteristics associated with a public "melting-pot" school environment. In reviewing the documentary record, the researcher formed the opinion that often neither Division #46 nor provincial administrators understood the inadequacy of a formal religious instruction program to fulfil Catholic desires in respect of schooling. Indicative of this view is the following extract from a letter from the superintendent of Division #46 to two Fort Kent parents:

A French program and a religious instruction program has been offered at the Fort Kent school and will continue to be offered to meet local needs. It is indeed unfortunate that in your opinion these programs are not satisfying the cultural, linguistic and religious needs of your children.⁸²

Somewhat ironically, six years earlier the members of the Fort Kent Advisory School Board had demanded from Division #46 within three days

. . . at least a letter of intent, stating that it's clearly the Divisional Board's intention to institute religious education courses, acceptable to the Catholic population of the Fort Kent school. . . [Otherwise they would]. . . take whatever action is necessary to withdraw Catholic students from the Fort Kent school and have them enrolled in the school of the Bonnyville School District.

The chairman of Division #46 at the time of reorganization commented on the influence of religion in the late 1970's upon his board:

. . . one of the greatest problems that we were running into [were] complaints right

⁸¹Swift Inquiry (1972), *Transcript of Proceedings*, p. 208.

⁸²Correspondence S. Skuba to Mrs. C. Croteau and Mrs. F. Mercier, 10 August 1978.

across our jurisdiction from those who were of the Roman Catholic faith that we were not providing an opportunity for them to have religious instruction, which they said was one of their rights. . .we were being hounded very strenuously about that.

However, despite its significance in the years immediately prior to reorganization, the chairman stated:

[I was] not convinced within myself that [religion] truly was the basic problem, or the whole problem . . . I always felt that language more than religion [was the issue] . . . they [francophones] were wishing to retain the French culture, more so than the Catholic religion.⁸³

A similar view was espoused by others who often cited the co-operative relations that existed between Division #46 and Grand Centre and Cold Lake Separate Boards to support their contention that language rather than religion was the major cause of the difficulties.⁸⁴

Language and Ethnicity

The conflict over language in the Bonnyville area centred on the strongly held desire on the part of many French-Canadians to retain their cultural heritage and promote the use of the French language in schools. The issue of language in particular appears to have been the foundation of many of the other conflicts. As has already been noted, the francophone Protestant community became assimilated into the dominant anglophone culture relatively early in the history of Bonnyville.⁸⁵ But the majority francophone Catholic community strenuously sought to retain the use of the language. Attention was drawn to this matter by a former superintendent of Division #46:

I think that phenomena, the French phenomena if you wish, Bonnyville was the last community in Alberta which was trying to retain the solid French culture. . . . And it was French with all the traditions, and you have to understand the Catholic French as it were in Quebec and the attempt was being made I think to retain Bonnyville as the last centre.⁸⁶

With changes in the composition of the Bonnyville population, greater accommodation to the anglophone culture had to be made. However, throughout the 1970's, thinking that had its basis in an earlier vision of francophone society continued to be evident. District #2665 leaders did not at any stage seriously contemplate the thought of amalgamation with Division #46 although it had been suggested to them on many occasions.⁸⁷ There continued to be

⁸³A. Edstrom, Interview, 27 January 1983.

⁸⁴J. Coulombe, Interview, 10 November 1983.

⁸⁵The last bilingual Minister of the United (formerly Presbyterian) church in Bonnyville, left the parish in 1938.

⁸⁶H. A. MacNeil, Interview, 12 December 1983.

⁸⁷Amalgamation was the alternative initially favoured by the Division in the protracted negotiations concerning the establishment of Bonnyville Regional School

considerable suspicion as to the motives of certain influential anglophones.

At the 1972 Swift Inquiry Dr. B. Brosseau referred with great feeling to the anti-French attitudes of a trustee of Division #46. At a vitriolic meeting of the Bonnyville High School Committee concerned with the need to hire additional teachers, one for English classes and the other for French classes, the same Division #46 trustee stated "I'll be frank with you, if you hire two English teachers, I'll vote in favor."⁸⁸ Further, the trustees of Division #46 initially "considered that the name of the new high school in Bonnyville should not be in French [in addition to English]". One trustee felt "that the French element in this school would create a further division in the community, that which had been going on for many years."⁸⁹ Against such a background, it is little wonder that leaders of the francophone community thought that their language could only be protected by retention of decision-making authority in their own school District.

In such an atmosphere, personal antagonisms based on language ran high. The assistant superintendent of Division #46 summed up the views of many respondents when he commented ". . . there were also . . . personal feelings . . . a fair amount of mistrust which was not a healthy situation at the time."⁹⁰

A former Division #46 trustee elaborated further on this matter:

Well again, I think that if you live in this town . . . if you go back . . . [a] number of years there was probably a fair amount of animosity between the French and the non-French. And I think a lot of that animosity as far as the board members were concerned comes down to that - personality differences were brought into board work . . . [refers to several incidents of past history] those kind of things kept coming up. At one time I don't think anybody walked from one office to the other. Some of the first meetings when this centralized high school was being set up you almost had to be a strong arm man to stop some of the people fighting each other.⁹¹

Certainly many respondents attested as to the significance of language problems. It was claimed that:

The issue in Bonnyville never was religion. It is indicated this way because there was a public and separate. The real issue has been, is, and always will be, not religion but language - French . . . I definitely do feel that the real issue is not issue of religion but of language.⁹²

An administrator commented "That . . . the French [language] problem is a bigger problem

⁸⁷(cont'd) District #4. Bonnyville S. Div.#46, Minutes 9 February 1972.

⁸⁸Minutes, Bonnyville High School Committee, 9 August 1972.

⁸⁹Minutes, Bonnyville High School Committee, 10 February 1971.

⁹⁰W. Hayduk, Interview, 9 November 1983.

⁹¹A. Ryll, Interview, 4 November 1983.

⁹²S. Skuba, Interview.

than the religious problems."⁹³ A trustee stated, "I always felt that perhaps it was that language more than religion . . . it certainly had a major impact on our relationships."⁹⁴

The main form in which the language issue confronted Division #46 was as requests from ratepayers for the Division to approve the enrolment of their children in District #2665 schools and provide the necessary transportation. The problems such requests raised for the Division have been discussed under the heading 'Boundaries and Transportation' later in this chapter. However, at this point, it is relevant to note that in almost every documented case of francophones in conflict with Division #46 during the 1970's, the ostensible reason was the desire for bilingual education.

Immediately following the withdrawal of the last two nuns from the Fort Kent school, five parents wrote to Division #46 in reference to a total of twenty-one children stating:

We feel that the school at Fort Kent is not meeting the standards in the French language which we deem necessary. As the Notre Dame schools of Bonnyville are maintaining these standards we feel that we owe it to our children to send them to the Bonnyville District Schools.⁹⁵

A few months earlier one of these parents had written to the Minister of Education stating his dissatisfaction with programs at the Fort Kent school: "there is not enough French and religion, and the teachers are mostly beginners with no teaching experience."⁹⁶

On behalf of a group of Fort Kent francophone parents, the following statement was presented before the Swift Inquiry:

We do, however, want to point out on the basis of historical developments and actual fact that the programs we want and the state of their development are only found in the District schools. In fact, we have realized that only by pooling the students whose parents want these programs can they be organized and developed . . . In short, Fort Kent can only offer instruction in the French language for short periods of time while the District can develop a fully bilingual [language] program as well as teach an important number of subjects in French as well.⁹⁷

Six years later after the promotion of national bilingual policies by the federal government, the case for access to bilingual education in the schools of District #2665 was still having to be argued by francophone residents of Division #46. In a Brief submitted to the Division the following argument was advanced:

We believe that today, more than ever before, our children should be guaranteed access to their linguistic and cultural heritage. They should have the opportunity to

⁹³W. Hayduk, Interview.

⁹⁴A. Edstrom, Interview.

⁹⁵Correspondence J. Lord, R. Lacombe, B. Gamache, R. Croteau and M. LeBlanc to R. Doonanco, Secretary-Treasurer of Bonnyville S.Div.#46, 4 October 1971.

⁹⁶Correspondence B. Gamache to R. Clarke, Minister of Education, 28 July 1971.

⁹⁷Swift Inquiry, **Transcript of Proceedings**, pp.228-9, 15 November 1972.

achieve fluency in both French and English in order that they may feel equally comfortable in their home language as in the language of the milieu . . . Although our generation benefitted from a predominantly French-speaking home and community and thus, succeeded in retaining its cultural and linguistic identity, the changes in today's society are such that our children need education in the French language in order to achieve what we could absorb from our family and community. The increasingly heterogeneous composition of the Fort Kent community, the advent of mass communication and the need to urbanize are among the major factors which are eroding our chances of successfully transmitting our linguistic and cultural heritage to our children.⁹⁸

This writer articulates the deeply held desire of many Canadians of French descent to retain and transmit their linguistic and cultural heritage. To these people, denying them and their children the right to a French language education in a Canadian province was akin to denying them their citizenship.

At the time of reorganization several cases involving access to bilingual education were unresolved.⁹⁹ In each case, parents resided outside the specially designated attendance areas of either Fort Kent or Therien and therefore did not qualify under Divisional policy for transport to Bonnyville S.D. #2665 or County of St. Paul schools. So although these cases were argued on the ground of access to bilingual education, the actual issue of dispute was, as had always been the case, that of transportation. This was especially so with regard to Bonnyville S.D. #2665 who accepted students without tuition agreements.

The response of Division #46 to such requests followed a clear pattern. In the early 1970's the Division defended its French language program at Fort Kent. For example, the superintendent replied to the five Fort Kent parents, "Your concerns that the school at Fort Kent is not meeting the standards in the French language is indeed unfounded."¹⁰⁰ In addition, the effect that withdrawing children from the French language program at Fort Kent would have on the viability of the program for students who remained was pointed out. It was somewhat ironic that, having responded to pressure from the francophone community at Fort Kent in the mid 1950's and built a large school, the Division now found the school being deserted by many of those same families. But other events such as the closing of the convent and demographic changes in the Fort Kent area had altered the character of the Fort Kent school community.

⁹⁸Brief to Division #46 by Parents of Fort Kent Interested in Enrolling their Children in Schools Operated by Bonnyville S.D. #2665, 11 September 1980.

⁹⁹The Tellier and Swiderski families of Ardmore wanted transport to Notre Dame Schools in Bonnyville and the Feland family of Glendon wanted transport to Mallaig.

¹⁰⁰Correspondence, S. Skuba to J. Lord, R. Lacombe, B. Gamache, R. Croteau and M. LeBlanc, 22 October 1971.

Later in the 1970's the Division tacitly admitted the inferiority of its French language program at Fort Kent when compared to those offered by District #2665, but argued that financially and in the interests of the majority of those attending Fort Kent it could not allow the school enrolment to be depleted any further by transfers to Bonnyville public schools. The Division responded to the Brief submitted by Fort Kent parents and stated that:

... although it [Board of Division #46] fully appreciates your desire for a bilingual education for your children, a program which can not be provided at the Fort Kent School because of limited numbers, it can not direct your children to a school in another District. The precedent that would be set by such a course of action would have far reaching implications for the Board, because of various needs perceived by parents who would make similar requests.¹⁰¹

By late 1978, following the failure of negotiations with Division #46, B. Chartrand, on behalf of a number of Fort Kent parents, presented a brief to the then Minister of Education, Hon. J. Koziak. In the Brief, Chartrand did not dispute the negative effect the granting of their request may have on enrolment at the Fort Kent school and the financial problems that may be created for Division #46

... for which the school board does not have solutions. However, we believe that when parents who choose to enrol their children in a bilingual program operated by a school jurisdiction other than their own, are refused access to public funds for transportation and for tuition, that this is in violation of the rights of parents to exercise free choice in regard to the education of their children . . .¹⁰²

While acknowledging the ensuing difficulties for the Division, the authors of the Brief argued the priority rights of parents. In a follow up letter to the Minister, B. Chartrand stated that "the principle of accessibility should be invoked when it has been demonstrated that the objective of availability is unattainable."¹⁰³ Clearly, Division #46 was not able to offer a genuine bilingual program at Fort Kent. Yet, it was caught in a web of interacting factors which made it very difficult for it to readily accede to parental requests for transfer to District #2665 schools on the basis of bilingual programs. The School Act 1970, S. 150 gave discretionary power to school boards to authorize the use of French as the language of instruction subject to Ministerial regulation. It contained no provisions whereby parents could by right either require such instruction from their own board or transport to a school of a neighbouring board where instruction in French was available.

Difficulties over both language and religion were experienced in the Therien area in the west of the Division. Prior to the closing of the Therien school in June 1969, feelings ran so

¹⁰¹Correspondence, S. Skuba to C. Croteau and F. Mercier, 30 September 1978.

¹⁰²Brief submitted by B. Chartrand to J. Koziak, October 1978.

¹⁰³Correspondence B.Chartrand to J.Koziak, 25 December 1978.

high that violence, including the lynching of the principal, was threatened. The majority of francophone parents refused to send their children to Glendon, preferring to transport them at their own expense to Mallaig. French was introduced as a compulsory subject for grades one to nine, but this did not meet the desires of francophone parents for bilingual education in which part of the program would be taught in French. Although it took a number of years, the Therien problem was eventually solved through a tuition agreement with the County of St. Paul which enabled francophone children to attend the Mallaig school.¹⁰⁴

The growth of acceptance of the language rights of French-Canadians during the 1970's at both national and provincial levels probably served to intensify the desire for bilingual education from Division #46 francophones who had previously accepted that French language and culture had to be learned in the home and the community. However, a former Department of Education administrator suggested that language and culture were not issues until federal bilingualism and bicultural policies were developed in the early 1970's and that the language issue was being used by Roman Catholic church authorities to enrol children in Catholic schools.¹⁰⁵ Such a view was disputed by a former District #2665 administrator.¹⁰⁶ Certainly it would appear that the reasons for the formation of Bevan and Willow Trail Separate School Districts in 1970 were centred more on religious than linguistic reasons.

Another administrator made the important observation that not all francophones desired to retain a separate identity to the same extent as did many of their leaders. He observed:

I think you have to understand the total situation of Bonnyville. Although this appeared on the top that there was this desire on their part to be apart - to be independent - to keep their own French culture - this was not accepted by the majority of the people in Bonnyville #2665.¹⁰⁷

While it is not possible to establish the degree of accuracy of this statement, which was disputed by some francophone respondents, clearly the francophone community in the Bonnyville area can not be treated as a unified entity. It is relevant to note in passing that class and faction divide the community. Some of these stem from family origins in Quebec and the northern U.S.A. as well as differences in attitude as to the role of the church. In past years the Fort

¹⁰⁴W. Worbets, notes almost incredulously at the foot of a memorandum to B. L. Stringham of Field Services, 26 March 1976, "Believe it or not but the 'Therien Problem' is being resolved locally."

¹⁰⁵R. Penrice, Interview, 13 December 1983.

¹⁰⁶Correspondence, J. Moquin to R. L. Iles, May 1984.

¹⁰⁷H. A. MacNeil, Interview.

Kent and LaCorey francophone communities had significant differences with the people of Bonnyville. While such differences have greatly receded, the researcher was given "off the record" evidence that these divisions still surface from time to time.

In addition to language there was the related issue of ethnicity. Not only were there difficulties between those of English and French background, but also between francophones and people of eastern European descent. A Divisional trustee remarked that "there were a lot of middle European people, people who were only one generation from the immigrant, had come into the area and were resented by that old core [of the francophone community]." ¹⁰⁸ A former Divisional superintendent also drew attention to the strong feelings that existed between the French and Ukrainian populations. Ukrainians were generally not prepared to grant the French language any special privileges unless the same were accorded the Ukrainian language.¹⁰⁹ Often class differences intensified ethnic divisions. However, under the former jurisdictions, the impact of these problems on school affairs was minimal since the bulk of the francophones were in District #2665 and the Ukrainians were in Division #46. Generally cooperation prevailed, although particular issues could occasionally result in open displays of hostility.

Issues of both religion and language generated problems for the school jurisdictions, and clearly, perceptions as to the effects of each vary significantly. The francophone question appeared to be at the base of both linguistic and religious issues for education in the Bonnyville area. Two observations by W. H. Swift, while not applicable to all francophones, seemed to encompass the attitudes of a large majority. These are quoted below:

. . . There is one desire that transcends all others, that their children should be permitted to attend school, where the French language has some prominence and where religious instruction and atmosphere are an integral part of school operation.¹¹⁰

I can only surmise, but I think it would be safe to say that in the French-speaking communities of Alberta, whether it was Bonnyville or wherever . . . that somehow language and religion came to be part of a syndrome - that the language supported the faith and the faith supported the language.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸A. Edstrom, Interview.

¹⁰⁹H. A. MacNeil, Interview.

¹¹⁰Swift Report, p. 6.

¹¹¹Interview.

Boundaries and Transportation

Although many inter-jurisdictional disputes were argued on the basis of religion and language, the substantive issue was most often transportation. Partly, boundaries and transportation issues had to do with numbers of students, and students numbers represented dollars for a school system.

Although the boundaries of District #2665 had been expanded at various times in response to political pressure from mainly francophone Roman Catholics, in 1969 significant concentrations of francophones remained outside the District's boundaries.¹¹² Throughout the decade of the 1970's it would appear that an increasing number of francophone and Catholic residents of Division #46 desired to enrol their children in the Bonnyville schools of District #2665. This was a parallel factor that promoted conflict over boundary and transportation issues.

In 1963 the LaCorey school had been closed and through the work of Iron River sub-division trustee ¹¹³ an undertaking was given to the francophone parents living in the Lacorey School District that the Division would transport their children to District #2665 school if they so wished. This arrangement continued until 1969 when, as part of a drive for higher educational quality and financial improvement, the Division decided "to accommodate all the pupils who are the responsibility of the Division in its schools."¹¹⁴ This action was undertaken without consultation with those who were affected.¹¹⁵ Bitterness ensued with the LaCorey francophones feeling that an undertaking given at an earlier time had been blatantly disregarded, while District #2665 trustees considered the decision ran counter to the 1965 tuition agreement that existed between the two Boards.¹¹⁶ The dispute resulted in Bonnyville S. D. #2665 sending its buses into Division #46 territory to transport the LaCorey students. To this the Division retaliated by instituting injunction proceedings. Finally, the actual dispute was resolved by the intervention of the Minister of Education, Hon. R. C. Clark who directed that LaCorey pupils "shall be provided conveyance to the Bonnyville School District for the current school year." Any further plans for redirection of these students the Minister stated "should be

¹¹²See Map #2.

¹¹³J. C. Lajoie, Interview, 9 November 1983.

¹¹⁴A. E. Andrushak, Secretary-Treasurer, Bonnyville S. Div. #46 to G. Ouellette, Secretary-Treasurer, Bonnyville S. D. #2665, 21 February 1969.

¹¹⁵Trustee Tkachuk so indicated at Divisional board meeting, 19 February 1969.

¹¹⁶Correspondence Ouellette to Andrushak, 6 March 1969.

prefaced by public discussions in the LaCorey District."¹¹⁷ The directive was clearly intended by the Minister as an interim one year measure designed to overcome the specific difficulties of September 1969 by reinstituting the previous arrangements while the Division developed a more consultative approach to its planning. Through lack of further action by Division #46, the LaCorey directive assumed the status of a precedent that was to be often quoted through the 1970's.

A former superintendent recalled the significance of the Ministerial directive in the following words:

The LaCorey problem came with centralization . People didn't mind closing the school so much but they wanted to send their children to #2665 schools in Bonnyville. The District buses could not be allowed to go there. So naturally enough pressure was put upon the Minister and we were required [to transport them]. I still think that was the "edge of the wedge." When the Board declined them, directives were issued to the board of Bonnyville Division #46 to transport the children from LaCorey to Bonnyville. That was the beginning of difficulties. Other small pockets of French started saying, "Why only them"? They would want the privilege.¹¹⁸

Having allowed the precedent to be created as a result of their own inaction, the Division spent the rest of the decade endeavouring to limit the effect of the directive to the LaCorey attendance District only. One such case in 1974 involved the Lord and Gamache families of Fort Kent and resulted in considerable ill feeling being generated.

In September 1974, in an effort to force the Division into providing transportation for his children from Fort Kent to District # 2665 schools, J. Lord withheld his children from school altogether. In October 1974 J. Lord and B. Gamache wrote to Division #46 and used the LaCorey arrangements as a precedent stating, "You are presently making many special arrangements to accommodate other students of this school Division." Predictably the Division's reply was couched in what were to become during the remainder of the 1970's increasingly familiar terms:

The Board can not comply with your request because the practice would set a dangerous precedent which may in turn seriously jeopardize the instructional program offered in our schools.¹¹⁹

After having been absent from school for the months of September and October 1974, and aware that the Division intended to initiate legal action against J. Lord for the non attendance of his children at school, District #2665 agreed on 30 October to provide

¹¹⁷Correspondence R. C. Clark to Bonnyville S. Div. #46, 15 September 1969.

¹¹⁸S. Skuba, Interview.

¹¹⁹Correspondence, R. A. Doonanco, Secretary-Treasurer, Division #46 to J. Lord, 2 October 1974.

transportation for the Lord and Gamache families.¹²⁰ Immediately, Division #46 fired off a complaint to the Department of Education:

This morning we are in receipt of unofficial and unconfirmed information that the Board of Bonnyville School District #2665 will be sending their bus into our area to pick up the Lord children beginning Monday 4 November.¹²¹

On the same day, District #2665 informed the Department of Education of its decision. It was agreed that, since the children had been legally admitted to the District's schools and since transportation was not being provided by the Division despite "protracted and fruitless negotiations," the District had a right to provide transportation to pupils who attended its schools. The letter concluded with the observation that the District did not believe its decision to be "in contravention of any statutes of the Province of Alberta."¹²²

Later, in November, the Division issued an ultimatum to the District that, unless it stopped transporting the Lord and Gamache children, injunction proceedings would be commenced. However, due to the inadequate coverage of this matter in the *School Act* 1970, the law was of little solace to Division #46. The Deputy Minister was advised at this time that "the Act does not restrict any District from providing transportation to pupils from another District."¹²³ On the day before the Division's own solicitor's had given similar advice.¹²⁴

This practice of sending District buses into Division territory was referred to as "raiding" by those who administered the Division at that time. One administrator commented that, "In Bonnyville pressure was put on their Board and there were raids, sending buses outside their jurisdiction."¹²⁵ A similar statement is made by another administrator who spoke of "concerns about raiding."¹²⁶

The Division had the support of many ratepayers living in Fort Kent and the surrounding areas. These people were concerned that the Fort Kent attendance boundary be retained in order to ensure the survival of the Fort Kent school whose continuation they viewed as essential for the economic viability of the town. On 21 November, R. Ramsay forwarded a petition to the Minister of Education following a public meeting at Fort Kent which had condemned the erosion of the school's intake area at the hands of District #2665. Ramsay

¹²⁰Minutes, Bonnyville S. D. #2665, 30 October 1974.

¹²¹Correspondence S. Skuba to B. L. Stringham, Director of Field Services, 1 November 1974.

¹²²Correspondence G. Ouellette to B. L. Stringham, 1 November 1974.

¹²³Memorandum, B. H. Fennell to E. K. Hawkesworth, 29 November 1974.

¹²⁴Minutes, Bonnyville S. Div. #46, 28 November 1974.

¹²⁵S. Skuba, Interview.

¹²⁶W. Hayduk, Interview.

commented "the majority felt that the consequences would be the eventual closing of the Fort Kent school if this was allowed to continue."¹²⁷ The petition to the Minister read in part:

We hope that this will stir you into taking some action against the Bonnyville School District #2665 to stop them from sending buses to pick up children in our area.¹²⁸

It would appear from handwritten markings on the petition that an effort had been made, probably in the Department of Education, to identify the religious and ethnic background of signatories. These marginal entries indicate forty-five of the 121 signatories to be of French-Canadian background, nineteen non-French Catholics, twenty-nine Protestants and twenty-eight unidentified. As is still the case, the Catholic and francophone populations of Fort Kent were divided on the issue of support of the Fort Kent school.

Other cases involving transportation, some of which have been previously noted, were pursued through the 1970's with the inevitable further loss of goodwill by those involved. The Division was increasingly beleaguered by these transportation problems. Apart from francophone families in the Fort Kent area, there were transportation problems, as noted earlier in this chapter, with francophone families in the Therien and LaCorey areas and some non-francophone families wanting access to Catholic schooling in Bonnyville.

The policy of the Division appears to have been one of allowing its pupils to attend District #2665 schools only if the purpose was to take a specific program such as the immersion program for non-francophone students.¹²⁹

In the eastern area, however, where relations between the Separate Districts and the Division were quite cordial, the Division had a long history of bussing Catholic children living in its territory to Separate Districts #64 and #67 schools. Former trustee of Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67 commented, " . . . the Division was transporting the students actually to the public school, but they cheated a little bit and just pulled over in our yard and students that wanted to, got off."¹³⁰ The number of children involved was always relatively small and was compensated for by some children of the Separate Districts attending the public schools in Grand Centre and Cold Lake.

As previously noted, the Therien dispute had been resolved in 1976 by an agreement with the County of St. Paul. The Fort Kent situation, however, remained as difficult as ever

¹²⁷Correspondence R. Ramsay to L. D. Hyndman, Minister of Education, 21 November 1974.

¹²⁸Petition to Minister of Education signed by 121 persons.

¹²⁹W. Hayduk, Interview.

¹³⁰E. Bisson, Interview, 23 November 1983.

partly because of the potential number of pupils concerned and also because of the effect that any solution involving parental freedom of choice would have for the economic viability of the Fort Kent school. Other cases confronted the Division including requests by Ukrainian families to have children transported to the Duclos school (Bonnyville) which offered a program of Ukrainian studies.

In the Bonnyville area, duplicate bus routes by both the District and the Division were uneconomic and a continuing source of ill-feeling. In addition, District buses ran along the boundaries of its area and were able to transport children who were living on the other side of the road. Many parents transported their children as far as the District's boundaries where they could meet its buses. This was a significant factor in the Fort Kent situation.

After 1975 what might be termed the "floodgate theory" became an increasingly important factor in the thinking of Division #46 trustees and administrators. There was a genuinely held fear that if any requests to be referred to the schools of another jurisdiction were granted other than for the reasons already mentioned, the Division would be inundated with similar such requests. The following words of the Chairman of Division #46 capture the tenor of this concern:

That was my genuine feeling because I was receiving requests even from some individuals at Cold Lake and several in Grand Centre . . . once we opened the door there was no end to it . . . to the limits of our jurisdiction . . . we had that really strong fear because we knew that there were . . . in the Ardmore District quite a few French-Canadians. Then we went on to Grand Centre where we were getting several there. Then because of the fact that we did feel a certain requirement to attempt to treat all of our students as fairly as we could, we were getting some very genuine calls from students and parents who wished to be moved to an area where they could take instruction in the Ukrainian language and so on. . . . We said "Where is this thing going to end?" And we recognized we were creating a hardship maybe to a few who we were refusing. We realized [also] that if we were to say, "That's it, the doors are open. Go where you want. We will transport you . . ." It was an insurmountable problem and we would never make everybody happy. No matter how far we leaned over, there would be some who would be just unhappy as those who are unhappy right now. We might as well face it now and go no further. I think that was the position I was taking, and recognize that we were, yes I suppose, treating a few unfairly from their point of view. But we were convinced we could never make everybody happy.¹³¹

Division #46 trustees were clearly in a very difficult situation and the compromise policy they adopted of referring children to another school only for specific programs but not for general religious or linguistic reasons was difficult to implement and even more difficult to explain satisfactorily to concerned ratepayers. Whatever policy was adopted the Division stood to lose either financially or in terms of morale and public support.

¹³¹A. Edstrom, Interview.

From the viewpoint of District #2665, the Fort Kent dispute over transport assumed a different hue. By the end of the 1970's, it was offering immersion classes in many areas of the curriculum. It seemed logical, especially since the District was a public system, that any students desiring immersion classes be referred to its schools. A trustee of District #2665 gave a contrasting perspective to that provided by Division personnel:

. . . there were problems because in those days [1970's] especially, the students from the Fort Kent area or outside of our boundaries who wanted to take French were not allowed to come to our system. The former school Division would not transport them to our schools and would not allow us to go and get them. Outside of our boundaries, we were not allowed to send school buses. Therefore these students had to come for quite a while on their own, especially from the Fort Kent area. This was always an aggravation.¹³²

The means used by the provincial authorities to ensure that the District's buses remained within its territory are discussed in the third section of this chapter.

Taxation Revenue

A major factor in the desire by Division #46 trustees to retain their own students was that provincial grants were provided on a per capita basis. Thus, every student lost to an adjoining District represented a loss of revenue to a jurisdiction that had a history of financial difficulty. As recently as 1977 the Division faced a \$300,000 deficit in a total budget of \$5,000,000.¹³³ One Division #46 trustee indicated that financial problems were the major concern of the Division in the late 1970's. He stated, "I think the first was a financial one. We were living, and, to a certain extent still, are with a very low tax base. We are living in a somewhat depressed area."¹³⁴

The Division provided educational services at seven centres. Historical circumstances and local political pressure dictated that as complete as possible range of facilities and services be provided at each centre. Therefore the costs incurred in its operations were often higher than would have been the situation in a geographically more confined system. For example, economically, students from Fort Kent ought to have been bussed either to Bonnyville or Ardmore that latter being almost mid-way between Bonnyville and Grand Centre.

An example of the difficulties generated by centralization can be illustrated by reference to the Division's 1969 plan to rationalize further its operations. A serious deficit had resulted in

¹³²C. Vincent, Interview, 9 November 1983.

¹³³A. Ryll, Interview, 4 November 1983.

¹³⁴A. Ryll, Interview.

the need for a \$20,000 grant from the Department of Education. However, tied to the grant was a directive that had the approval of the Minister of Education. It stated:

That the Division be informed that it must implement such economies as are necessary in relation to instructional salaries and expenses on 1 September 1968, so that it will not be dependent upon Section 11 grants for its 1969 operation. In other words, this means that the pupil/teacher ratio must be increased significantly.¹³⁵

In April 1969 the board of the Division had been personally informed by Dr. L. Hall and R. Lamothe, MLA (Bonnyville) that financial dictates necessitate centralization.¹³⁶ Thus, in view of its precarious financial position and the advice it was receiving from provincial authorities, centralization had to be pursued. This required, according to a motion passed by the Divisional board in March 1969, that as from September 1969 senior high students from Fort Kent, Duclos, Ardmore and Iron River attend the Fort Kent school; that junior high students from Cold Lake attend Grand Centre and junior high students from Fort Kent be transferred to the Ardmore school.¹³⁷ These plans were in addition to the transfer of all Therien pupils to Glendon and LaCorey pupils to the Fort Kent school. However, while these plans may have appeared thoroughly rational in terms of their practical feasibility and cost effectiveness, they nevertheless plunged the Board into six months of ratepayer turmoil. Parents of pupils attending the Duclos school indicated they would transfer their children to District #2665 schools rather than have them transported to Fort Kent.¹³⁸ Delegations also arrived in rapid succession from Cold Lake, Iron River, LaCorey and Therien.¹³⁹ The conflicts pitted economic rationality against political will and power. Inevitably, compromise ensued, but again a considerable residue of ill-will remained.

The low local base for supplementary assessment required that the Division maximize student retention in order to optimize grants available from the provincial government. Simultaneously declining enrolments in schools in the smaller centres exacerbated the Division's financial problems. The importance of provincial financing was detailed by a former superintendent of the Division:

Declining enrolments [were] another problem. I suppose being a rural area you did have a pretty low and narrow tax base. I think there were times that I recall that I am positive that there would be eighty-eight percent of our funds from provincial grants. When those started decreasing, we were in a hell of a position. We were a very low

¹³⁵Memorandum, U. R. Shogren, Field Administrative Officer to L. G. Hall, Director of School Administration, 10 June 1968.

¹³⁶ Minutes, Bonnyville S. Div. #46, 21 April 1969.

¹³⁷Minutes, Bonnyville S. Div. #46, 28 March 1969.

¹³⁸Duclos delegation, Bonnyville S. Div. #46, Minutes, 16 April 1969.

¹³⁹Bonnyville S. Div. #46, Minutes, Feb-June 1969.

assessment area: very low . . . this was a really poor, marginal farming area . . . I would say very definitely that declining enrolments [and] the very narrow tax base made it very dependent upon the Department of Education funds . . . And local people could not stand any higher taxation base at that time.¹⁴⁰

As had been the case in earlier periods of the town's history, the allocation of local taxes in the town of Bonnyville was a continuing source of difficulty. Largely this was due to Bonnyville S. D. #2665 being a Catholic public system. On a number of occasions respondents told stories of non-Catholic newcomers to Bonnyville indicating to the municipal authorities that they were public school supporters without having explained to them the fact that the public system was also the Catholic system. In addition, undeclared taxes went to the public school system. A trustee of District #2665 admitted that it received additional local tax revenue because of this confusion:

You know that in the past we were receiving tax dollars that normally should not have been ours. But we were not going to complain about it because the onus is on the separate District to see that it gets its taxes. And we were the public until 1980. The then school Division had a separate District - Duclos District- but they were not very active and they did not look after their taxes the way they should have. Undeclared were coming to us and that was it.¹⁴¹

An understanding of the ill feeling generated over the allocation of local taxes during the 1970's can be gleaned from the words of a former superintendent of Division #46.

We said [to the Minister and Department of Education officials] we think our problem would be completely different if the Catholic system was, as in the rest of the province, a separate system . . . people would come into the area and inquire about the school system and when they were told separate and public, you knew what it meant to them. To the majority of the people, the separate was the Catholic. So they [municipal administrators] would say, "Where do you want your taxes to go?" And the reply would come, "The Public." Not realizing that the public was the Catholic system . . . We would go there and look at the tax roll. He [the town administrator] would bawl us out, "You have no business with this tax roll" . . . There were many people that were sending their children to Divisional schools and their taxes were going to the public because they did not know any better. Short of us going from door to door and explaining that to the people, and we weren't about to stoop that low . . . Their taxes were paid for years until somebody found out in one way or another that their taxes had been going to the public system, which was the Catholic system, but their children had been going to a Divisional school.

Thus, genuine confusion, a measure of obscurantism, the difficulty of defining "Protestant" and a lack of effort by Division #46 to more rigorously attempt to enlist Protestants living in the Duclos Separate School District all contributed to a steady tax drain from the Division. This loss of revenue in the town of Bonnyville was a further problem factor in Division #46 and District #2665 relationships.

¹⁴⁰S. Skuba, Interview.

¹⁴¹C. Vincent, Interview.

Bonnyville Centralized High School

Formation. Bonnyville Centralized High School appears to have had its beginnings in a joint meeting between the trustees of Division #46, District #2665 and representatives of the Duclos and Ardmore sub-division in June 1968. Introductory comments were made by W. Wilson, superintendent of the Division, who noted that public meetings concerning a centralized high school held in Duclos, Iron River, Fort Kent, Ardmore and Bonnyville had been poorly attended and opinion varied from very favourable to no reaction whatsoever.¹⁴² Dr. S. N. Odynak, then a high school inspector, also addressed the meeting. The following motion was adopted:

That this meeting direct the Bonnyville School Division #46 and the Bonnyville School District #2665 to proceed with further discussions with a view to drawing up an Agreement for the establishment of a Regional High School District.¹⁴³

In light of later events, the reference to a Regional High School District is noteworthy.

At its December 1968 meeting, the Division had before it a motion to "enter into an agreement with District #2665 for a regional high school District."¹⁴⁴ However, a two-two split vote with one abstention saw the motion defeated in favour of a plebiscite of Divisional voters. No more is heard as to the plebiscite, but both Boards, and especially the Division, came to oppose the idea of a third school jurisdictional authority in the town.

After considerable negotiations, an agreement to form the Bonnyville Centralized High School Joint Committee comprising two trustees each from Division #46 and District #2665 was signed on 18 March 1970. The agreement provided that:

The parties agree to delegate to a special committee composed of members of both Boards all and any of the duties, powers and responsibilities conferred on them by The School Act . . . except for the powers to: (a) borrow money, or (b) pass a by-law.¹⁴⁵

The agreement also defined the boundaries and stipulated a variety of operational procedures. Some concerns had been raised as to whether the Joint Committee arrangement exceeded the powers granted under Section 92 of the School Act 1970, especially in regard to the teaching functions of a school. But according to testimony before the Swift Inquiry, as well as evidence in the minutes of Bonnyville S. D. #2665, an assurance had been given by Dr. Hall that the Committee arrangement would be provided for in the new School Act then being drafted.

¹⁴²Centralization Meeting, Minutes Bonnyville S. D. #2665, 26 June 1968.

¹⁴³Centralization Meeting Minutes.

¹⁴⁴Bonnyville S. Div. #46, Minutes, 20 December 1968.

¹⁴⁵Agreement Between Boards of Trustees of Bonnyville S. Div. #46 and Bonnyville S. D. #2665, 18 March 1970, clause #2.

Meanwhile plans went ahead for the constructing of a high school in Bonnyville.

The Issue of Corporate Status. It was not until the middle of 1971 that any difficulties emerged. A Field Administrative Officer in the Department of Education was probably the first person to draw attention to the legal problems inherent in the agreement. He recalled:

So I went and drew the file and started reading. And I went to Dr. Hall and I went to others and said that it may be fine they are building the school, but I don't see any legal structure to administer the thing once it gets going and so on. . . if we don't have an administrative structure then . . . the thing is doomed to failure.¹⁴⁶

Two years of dispute and ill-feeling resulted. District #2665 strongly suspected that the BCHS issue had been artificially created by senior Department of Education administrators as part of a long standing attempt to force their District into the Division. It was argued that monies for the operation of the high school could quite legally have continued to be paid to the two Boards.¹⁴⁷ The matter was not finally resolved until April 1973 by which time the Minister of Education had virtually forced the two Boards into forming Bonnyville Regional School District #4.¹⁴⁸

Initially, it had been suggested that while the Committee continue to be the policy-making body, one of the Boards assume corporate responsibility for the high school.¹⁴⁹ Neither Board was prepared to let the other assume this responsibility.¹⁵⁰ The solicitor for District #2665, G. Brosseau suggested a joint partnership¹⁵¹ but this had been warned against by B. L. Stringham:

If this were done, however, it would be dangerous in that it would set a precedent whereby the government would have to pay education grants to many types of bodies other than boards.¹⁵²

Since there was no chance of the District amalgamating with the Division, a further alternative, which was a portent of later events, had been suggested by a solicitor in the Attorney-General's Department. He advised that "the most appropriate resolution for the Bonnyville crisis may be the dissolution of both Boards under Section 25 [of the School Act]" and the appointment of an Official Trustee. This would give the Minister "the option to either

¹⁴⁶R. Penrice, Interview, 13 December 1983.

¹⁴⁷J. Moquin, Interview, 8 June 1984.

¹⁴⁸Should the two Boards have failed to sign the agreement establishing a Regional District at their meeting with the Minister of Education, 18 April 1973, the Minister had a draft Ministerial Order already drawn by which to order the creation of a Regional District.

¹⁴⁹Bonnyville S. D. #2665 Minutes, 29 June 1971.

¹⁵⁰#2665 Minutes, 15 February 1972.

¹⁵¹Correspondence, G. Brosseau to L. D. Hyndman, 30 May 1972.

¹⁵²Memorandum, B. L. Stringham to J. Hrabi, Associate Deputy Minister, 21 June 1972.

reorganize or restructure the school Division and Districts."¹⁵³ Other suggestions involving the Division taking over the high school completely or operating the school through tuition agreement with District #2665 proved to be equally unacceptable.¹⁵⁴

In September 1972, Dr. W. H. Swift was appointed by the Minister to conduct an inquiry into school affairs in Bonnyville. While the Inquiry was mainly occupied with the issue of a legal basis for the operation of the Centralized High School, matters of transportation and access to French language programs were also addressed.¹⁵⁵ Dr. Swift recommended "that the two Boards look again, hopefully sympathetically, at the regional district legislation." It was upon this recommendation that the Minister of Education acted.

Other Issues. Problems relating to language, religion, the naming of the school, staffing, reimbursement of the Ladies of St. Anne for kitchen equipment that passed to the new high school when the old Notre Dame High School gymnasium was incorporated into it, as well as to the personalities of those trustees who formed the Joint Committee were all present. Most of these were aired at the Swift Inquiry, and evidence of the feeling they generated is apparent. In addition, the minutes of the Committee are suggestive of very heated debate and ill-feeling. Following the formation of the Regional High School District and a change of trustees to represent the Division, the difficulties retreated to more manageable proportions.

Through all the early years of crisis at the trustee level, the school functioned very effectively. Witnesses before the Swift Inquiry unanimously agreed on this point. It would appear that considerable credit for this is attributable to the founding principal E. Isley¹⁵⁶ who forcefully represented the needs of the school to the relevant trustees, shielded the internal operations of the school from disputes occurring at board level, promoted a participatory style of leadership in which teaching staff were heavily involved and committed, and attempted to develop and establish a philosophy in regard to students that stressed the development of personal responsibility.

Difficulties with trustees in regard to the last two matters caused an increasing degree of friction between the principal and the superintendent and trustees of the Regional Board and

¹⁵³Legal opinion, R. D. Karoles, solicitor, Attorney-General's Department, 16 August 1972.

¹⁵⁴Bonnyville S. D. #2665, Minutes, 6 September 1972.

¹⁵⁵**Inquiry into School Affairs: Bonnyville Area, Report and Recommendations of Inquirer.** Dr. W. H. Swift, January 1973.

¹⁵⁶Ernest Isley was principal from 1971-78. He became Bonnyville M.L.A. in 1979 and is presently the Minister for Manpower in the Alberta Government.

was finally responsible for Isley's resignation at the end of May 1978 which was accepted by the Board in a four-two vote. Despite the difficulties generated over the Centralized High School, it was widely held that the school had been a means by which the two Bonnyville Boards became more aware of each other's perspectives and was productive of greater communication. A trustee of District #2665 commented:

On many items we were getting along, especially since we had Bonnyville Centralized High School. This was a thing that we had in common. Therefore this helped to settle other matters.¹⁵⁷

While improved communication resulted in a greater level of co-operation between the District and the Division, it could do little to rectify fundamental problems of governance that continued to exist between Division #46 and some of its ratepayers.

Inter-town Rivalry

In addition to the mosaic of problems already mentioned that confronted the provision of educational services in this area, a considerable degree of inter-town rivalry prevailed, often intensified by language and ethnic considerations. Both because of its predominant francophone population and because it was the largest town in the area, people in surrounding towns tended to resent and be distrustful in their attitudes to Bonnyville. During the 1970's the eastern towns of Grand Centre and Cold Lake attempted to wrest dominance from Bonnyville. Even within the francophone community, as has already been discussed, considerable rivalry existed between Fort Kent and Bonnyville.

In the east end, a considerable rivalry existed between the old established centre of Cold Lake and the recently developed business community of Grand Centre. A former Divisional Superintendent commented:

You had a shift, I think politically the importance of which has now come; the importance of the shift of emphasis from Cold Lake to Grand Centre. Cold Lake was the big place . . . but [it] now of course has become the secondary, almost a bedroom community. The people, powerful families, who had been there for a while in business resented Grand Centre growing.¹⁵⁸

And it was inevitable that such rivalry would affect relations between the two school Boards. As one Grand Centre Separate District trustee commented: "You know there is always that rivalry between any two organizations, two towns. This is unfortunately true."¹⁵⁹ The Cold

¹⁵⁷C. Vincent, Interview.

¹⁵⁸H. A. MacNeil, Interview.

¹⁵⁹J. Coulombe, Interview, 10 November 1983.

Lake trustee on the Divisional Board identified a further perspective when he remarked:

Cold Lake is the old town. Grand Centre sprang up really after the advent of the military base. As a result, many of the services which were in this town slipped away to the newer, faster growing town. There's a lot of bitterness in many areas. The school is one in particular. There was always a high school in this town, and suddenly it has no high school in the public system. There are still a lot of people who are bitter about that.¹⁶⁰

Small centres such as Fort Kent, Ardmore, Iron River and Glendon, having lost many local facilities and services, viewed the school as almost the major factor holding the community together. Thus, they adopted a very jealous and protective attitude toward its continuation. In the case of Fort Kent and Glendon, demographic changes involving a loss of homogeneity of population has lessened the desire to nurture the local school. It would appear that particular educational values rank more highly than loyalty to the local town and its institutions with residents who send their children to the Notre Dame schools in Bonnyville. Continued loss of rural population and expansion of the larger centres during the late 1970's, further disadvantaged them. As has been evidenced earlier in this chapter, the bussing of pupils from one centre to another engendered considerable hostility on various occasions during the decade 1969-79.

Summary

Six major areas of educational conflict have been briefly discussed: religion, language and ethnicity, jurisdiction boundaries and transportation, taxation revenue, Bonnyville Centralized High School and inter-town rivalry. None of the issues of conflict within these six areas can be understood in isolation. For purposes of identification and discussion they have been grouped; however, in the minds of participants, such a division was quite artificial and could be interpreted as quite misleading. Issues argued on grounds of educational philosophy often emerged as conflicts over substantive issues of transportation and finance.

Conflictual issues from each of these major areas were intertwined and compounded to the inevitable personal antagonism and mistrust such conflicts generate. Those responsible for the provision of educational services at the local level in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area through the 1969-79 decade, had to do so in what can only be described as a very difficult political environment.

¹⁶⁰A. Edstrom, Interview, 27 January 1984.

C. Provincial Government Intervention

During the decade 1969-79, the government of Alberta, through the Department of Education and its Minister, used a variety of strategies to influence and intervene in school affairs in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area of Alberta. These interventions are the focus of this final section of the historical review. They ranged from informal and unofficial telephone conversations through to Ministerial threats to use legislative measures.

The need for intervention arose usually because unresolved grievances at the local jurisdiction were being appealed to the Department of Education or directly to the Minister and occasionally to the Premier.¹⁶¹ While letters were a common means of filing grievances, on significant issues a local delegation would present a case personally. Given the problems that beset education in this area of north eastern Alberta, the area received considerable Departmental attention throughout the decade. As was the case in the earlier sections of this chapter, only an overview of provincial intervention can be outlined.

At the beginning of the decade under discussion, considerable provincial involvement in the educational affairs of the area resulted from the conflict generated by Division #46's decisions to (1) retain all their students in Divisional schools and (2) centralize its junior high and high school operations. In response to pressure from LaCorey residents whose children had attended District #2665 schools since 1963 and from the Board of that District, the Minister of Education R. C. Clark directed Division #46 to continue bussing LaCorey students to District #2665 schools:

. . . pupils of that District [LaCorey] shall be provided conveyance to the Bonnyville District School for the current school year . . .
Your prompt attention to this directive is requested.¹⁶²

No authority is cited by the Minister for his action. Dr. W. H. Swift commented concerning the letter:

I remember seeing that letter, and being utterly perplexed by it. The word used in it was "directive", but there was absolutely nothing in law anywhere that gave the Minister any authority to issue a directive. The Minister, as far as I could see, was merely relying on what might be called prestige somehow. There was nothing in the Department of Education Act or the School Act which gave the Minister any authority whatsoever to issue something called a directive and in particular a directive with respect to this particular matter. In my opinion, it was a completely unlawful and irregular thing for the Minister to do.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹Correspondence B. Gamache to Premier's office, 5 November 1971.

¹⁶²R. C. Clark to Bonnyville S. Div. #46, 15 September 1969.

¹⁶³Interview, 8 December 1983.

However, in seeking to moderate one particular set of pressures, albeit seemingly illegally, the Minister created other problems which were to further complicate local relationships. For, since it would appear as has already been argued that the directive had an implicit one year duration, no attempt was made to deal with the issue of costs incurred in the service and, failing a resolution within a year, what time limit, if any, applied to the directive.

A former superintendent of Division #46 viewed the directive from a Divisional perspective and raised the issue of local autonomy for school boards:

It would have been ridiculous for us to bus children from our jurisdiction at our expense and lose eligibility for the school foundation grant. I think the Minister and his department could see that. At the same time local autonomy was being fostered. But when real issues came along, there were directives, that wasn't local autonomy at all . . . when the real pressure came the political decision had to come. The Board erred very definitely in not saying if you are issuing this directive what funds are you providing us with. That was never done. They continued to follow that directive blindly. At that time the word of the Minister was gospel truth.¹⁶⁴

The considerable difficulties that Division #46 experienced over the issue of local autonomy through the 1970's originated in the basic structure of educational governance in the province. For although education is constitutionally a provincial government responsibility,¹⁶⁵ the province has delegated significant powers relating to the delivery of educational services to locally elected school boards.¹⁶⁶ By such delegation of authority a provincial government limits its own authority to intervene at the local district level and often through the 1970's, provincial authorities responded to complaints regarding transportation problems in the Bonnyville area with the plea that they had no jurisdiction over the matter. But generally they supported the Division's position. An example is provided by the following extract of a 1971 letter from the Deputy Minister of Education to a Fort Kent parent:

I can understand and appreciate your desire for bilingual education for your children. However, I'm sure that you will understand the position of Bonnyville School Division which will lose considerable grants if 14 children are taken out of the Fort Kent school and will probably have no corresponding decrease in expenditure. . . . may weaken the present French program of the Fort Kent school to the detriment of other bilingual students who will continue to attend that school. . . . transportation is almost entirely a local responsibility.¹⁶⁷

Near the end of the decade in 1978, the then Minister of Education, J. Koziak, continued to use arguments based on local autonomy to forestall provincial intervention. Responding to a group of Fort Kent parents, he argued that (1) transport is a matter for

¹⁶⁴S. Skuba, Interview.

¹⁶⁵Constitution Act, 1981, S. 93.

¹⁶⁶Department of Education Act; School Act.

¹⁶⁷Correspondence, R. E. Rees to R. Lacombe, 7 September 1971.

Division #46 and he would not interfere, (2) in the opinion of the Divisional superintendent French was adequate at the Fort Kent school for local needs, (3) the direction of students to another jurisdiction is a discretionary power of the local Board under the *School Act*, and (4) perhaps the Small School Assistance Grant should be used to obtain additional funding for French classes at Fort Kent.¹⁶⁸

This response did not satisfy these parents. They wanted bilingual education for their children, not a French course "adequate . . . for local needs." Transport to Bonnyville would still be denied to their children. The suggestion to use the Small Schools Grants was not particularly helpful. The grant was not designed to deal with the type of situation present in Fort Kent and besides, it was somewhat naive to think that additional finance could solve the root problems of language and religion in education.

Despite it being quoted as a precedent by numerous complainants during the 1970's, the 1969 Ministerial directive to Division #46 stands alone. No other attempt to direct a Bonnyville school board to take particular action is evident. Generally, Ministers of Education and their Departmental officials were very concerned to affirm the principle of local autonomy.

However, provincial education authorities became involved as negotiators and mediators on a number of occasions in conflict situations that arose between the two Bonnyville school jurisdictions. A major example of such intervention concerned the conflict that arose over the appropriate form of corporate entity for Bonnyville Centralized High School. Throughout 1972 various attempts were made to reach a negotiated settlement. Departmental officials visited both the Divisional and District boards, and the Deputy Minister issued a deadline for the Boards to arrive at a memorandum of agreement regarding the corporate status of the high school or suffer a loss of revenue. In May and again in September the Minister of Education, L. D. Hyndman, met with both Boards.

In April 1972, the Minister appears to have been close to ordering that Bonnyville S. Div. #46, be designated the corporate body for the Bonnyville Centralized High School. The Division would have acted as directed by the Joint Committee of #46 and #2665. On political, legal and administrative grounds, it can be understood why the Minister might hold back from implementing an administrative arrangement that would separate decision-making and legal responsibility. With the failure to reach an agreement, he announced at his September meeting

¹⁶⁸Correspondence, J. Koziak to B. Chartrand, 10 November 1978.

with the two Boards the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry to investigate school affairs in the Bonnyville area. To this end, Dr. W. H. Swift, former Deputy Minister of Education, was appointed in September 1972 to conduct the Inquiry. Dr. Swift was given a broad mandate to inquire into (1) any matters respecting the construction, management, administration and operation of the Bonnyville Centralized High School, and (2) other matters affecting Division #46 and District #2665 which included (a) the appropriateness of present geographical units of school administration, (b) the transportation system, (c) present and future facility needs, (d) tuition agreements between the two Boards and (e) any other matters concerning the relations between Division #46 and District #2665.

In his cautiously worded report Dr. Swift chose to address only those matters that had been referred to in submissions to the Inquiry. For this reason, a number of areas included in the Inquiry's terms of reference were disregarded. In regard to the central issue concerning a corporate entity for Bonnyville Centralized High School, Dr. Swift recommended "that the two Boards look again, hopefully sympathetically, at the regional district legislation."¹⁶⁹ On transportation he suggested that either the Division operate the entire bussing system in the area or that the recommended Regional High School District, on which both Boards were to be represented, should be the bussing authority. Aware of the difficulties this issue involved, he cautioned that "probably no solution should be dictated to the parties."¹⁷⁰ However, Swift acknowledged that provincial authorities could not turn a blind eye to the prevailing situation, and he forewarned that "if ultimately no progress is made some more direct intervention may be necessary."¹⁷¹

Although he did not address the issue of geographical boundaries directly, Dr. Swift did discuss the Fort Kent situation. He noted the split between those francophones who desired that their children attend the District schools in Bonnyville and those who wished to see the French language and Catholic religion given a higher profile in the Fort Kent school. Under the then prevailing situation, the Division could not satisfy either groups. Dr. Swift noted that "it may well be that the only ultimate solution to the Fort Kent problem is the closing of the school there." Catholic pupils could then attend District #2665 schools in Bonnyville while other students could attend the Ardmore school.

¹⁶⁹Swift Report, p. 19.

¹⁷⁰Swift Report, p. 22.

¹⁷¹Swift Report, p. 22.

Such a recommendation, however, totally disregarded the very strongly felt desire on the part of many Fort Kent residents to support their local community by attending the local school and church. In fact, the division that existed within the Fort Kent francophone community was, in large part, based on loyalty to different parishes.¹⁷² Dr. Swift also appears to have overlooked the effect that such a move may have had within Division #46, (a) financially, and (b) as a further precedent for requests by francophones in other areas (e.g. Ardmore) for transport to District #2665 schools.

The report dealt with only two matters relating to facilities. It was recommended that (a) approval for additions to Notre Dame Junior High School proceed, and (b) renovation be undertaken at the Ardmore school rather than transport pupils to Fort Kent. Such an arrangement would have unfairly associated the Ardmore community with the Fort Kent difficulties.

In dealing with "matters of complexity and potential or actual controversy," Dr. Swift saw that "the weight of evidence or consequential circumstance is not entirely on one side."¹⁷³ Clearly, in such a difficult situation the provincial authorities were well advised to tread carefully.

Following the Swift Inquiry, the Minister started to apply a number of pressures to the local Boards in order to settle the Bonnyville Centralized High School dispute and also the difficulties over transport. In the early months of 1973 following publication of the Inquiry Report in January, considerable negotiations took place between the two Boards. Several joint meetings with the Deputy Minister and other Departmental officials were held. Senior Departmental officials attempted to negotiate the terms of agreement for the formation of a regional high school district. The negotiations almost broke down completely at a meeting in late March. The reluctance of the Division to enter into a regional district led one Department of Education administrator to comment ". . . that under the circumstances, there appears to be no alternative but to let things happen as as they may".¹⁷⁴ No doubt due to the difficulty experienced in reaching an agreement concerning a regional high school district, District #2665 at its 3 April meeting reverted to requesting that the School Act be amended to legalize the March 1970 Joint Committee agreement.

¹⁷²Report by W. Worbets, Assistant Director of Field Services to the Minister of Education, 18 May 1975.

¹⁷³Swift Report, p.30-31.

¹⁷⁴Bonnyville S. D. #2665, Minutes, 27 March 1973.

At this point the Minister of Education, L. D. Hyndman, entered directly into the negotiations, and at a joint meeting with both Boards in April 1973 secured agreement to establish Bonnyville Regional School District #4. Undoubtedly the Minister was able to secure agreement because of his implied threat, dating back to April 1972, to order the establishment of a regional district.

On the new Board Division #46 and District #2665 had three representatives each, the superintendency as well as the chairmanship were to be rotated, the Regional District's supplementary rate would be limited to the lower of those set by the parent Boards and that District #2665 boundaries would not be expanded without the approval of Division #46. Transportation issues were omitted entirely from the agreement.

Contrary to its stance during the 1969 conflicts over centralization by the Division, District #2665 argued at the Swift Inquiry that transport was a local matter to be worked out between the two Boards.¹⁷⁵ However, as Dr. Swift pointed out, "no progress seems to have been made in this respect and no plans were in motion."¹⁷⁶

Although the transportation committees of both Boards met occasionally during 1974,¹⁷⁷ the unresolved difficulties remained, especially with regard to the Fort Kent situation where the Lord and Gamache families were continuing to pressure the Minister. So in December 1974 the Minister appointed W. Worbets to "look into the matters of concern related to him [the Minister] by petition and letters."¹⁷⁸

He reported in May 1975. Through local cooperation, the difficulties relating to the bussing of pupils from Bevan and Willow Trail Separate Districts to Bonnyville had been resolved. However, the Fort Kent situation had been further complicated by the move of five students who had transferred from Notre Dame junior high to the Fort Kent school due to internal difficulties that had been experienced at the Notre Dame school.¹⁷⁹ In discussing the transportation issue W. Worbets noted:

It appears that each jurisdiction is prepared to make unilateral decisions to accept non-resident students. And to some degree are prepared to provide transportation services for non-resident students.

¹⁷⁵Swift Report, p. 21.

¹⁷⁶Swift Report, p. 21.

¹⁷⁷Bonnyville S. D. #2665 Minutes, 28 January 1974.

¹⁷⁸Bonnyville S. D. #2665, Minutes, 11 December 1974.

¹⁷⁹"'Small-town sociology' breeds teacher resignations, pupil boycott in Bonnyville." St. John's Edmonton Report, 30 December 1974, pp. 18-19.

A key to the transportation difficulties was District # 2665's open door policy of recognizing parental right of choice as to which school their children attend. On the other hand, the Division had greater reservations although some individual trustees supported the policy.¹⁸⁰ Worbets noted:

The implications of the concept for this board [Division #46] are immense when one reviews the situation in the Therien area. It is unlikely that this principle will be accepted as policy.¹⁸¹

As a result of his inquiry, W. Worbets recommended that:

. . . no action be taken by the department at this time as there appears to be a considerable amount of concern about the problem by both parties. Tension has reduced. Furthermore, what action can be taken? These issues are a local responsibility and resolution of problems needs to be based on respect of each other's rights and authority. Respect and trust can not be dictated.¹⁸²

Despite agreement between the two Bonnyville Boards to consult on transportation matters following W. Worbets' report, difficulties continued between Division #46 and some of its electors who sought to obtain transportation to Bonnyville schools of District #2665. In reply to a letter of complaint from Division #46, W. Worbets defended the non-intervention strategy of the Department, assured the Division of the legality of their action in refusing to transport their pupils to District #2665 schools and indicated that Division pupils transported by the District would not be eligible for grants without a transportation agreement. He stated:

. . . it must be borne in mind that the Alberta Statutes do not empower the Department or the Minister to intervene even though the action [by another party] may not be acceptable in principle . . . Your Board has acted in accordance with the provisions of the School Act but unfortunately the decisions are in conflict with the expectations of some of the electors. It is hoped that good judgement prevails and that the practice in question [District bussing of Division students without approval] does not expand . . . [The District is] not eligible for grants without agreement pursuant to Section 160 of the School Act.¹⁸³

Two years earlier, the Director of Field Services had written to District #2665 threatening to implement the sanction suggested in the **Swift Report** as a means of forcing the District and the Division to rationalize transportation services:¹⁸⁴

Short of a local resolution being found, it is our intention to look again at the recommendation made by Dr. Swift for settling transportation issues, making it possible that some examination of an adjustment in your transportation grant may

¹⁸⁰Report to the Minister, p.4, 18 May 1975.

¹⁸¹Report to the Minister, p. 4.

¹⁸²Report to the Minister, p. 4.

¹⁸³Correspondence, W. Worbets to S. Skuba, 12 March 1976.

¹⁸⁴It was recommended that to ensure non duplication of bussing services payments to both Boards would be cut by ten percent until "evidence is provided of a clear-cut plan to implement rationalization." **Swift Report**, p. 21.

have to be considered.¹⁸⁵

Through provincial urging, a transportation agreement was obtained, based on the premise that neither Board should transport the other's students without approval. Although the agreement provided a formal framework for consultation and cooperation between the Boards, it did not solve the problem that faced a number of francophone and Catholic electors of Division #46; namely, to obtain Division approval and transportation of their children to the District's schools in Bonnyville. No provincial intervention to that date had even attempted to solve this problem. Dr. Swift's earlier suggestion of allowing these people to gain access to District schools, "their natural home", was seemingly put aside at both provincial and local levels.¹⁸⁶

In 1978, these problems reappeared in letters and petitions sent by a number of Fort Kent residents to the Minister.¹⁸⁷ Again, as previously noted, the then Minister, J. Koziak, refused to intervene in what was argued to be a transportation problem, but at heart, was a governance and school jurisdictional boundary problem.¹⁸⁸

By November 1978, local autonomy was somewhat less acceptable politically as a reason for non-intervention than was previously the case. In the Final Communiqué of the Premiers' Conference in Montreal, 23 February 1978, the following statement of principle regarding French language education had been agreed to by the Premier of Alberta:

The Premiers reaffirm their intention to make their best efforts to provide education to their English or French speaking minorities, and in order to ensure appropriate levels of service they also agree that the following principles should govern the availability of, as well as the accessibility to, such services,

1. Each child of the French-speaking or English-speaking minority is entitled to an education in his or her language in the primary and secondary schools in each province where ever numbers warrant.
2. It is understood, due to exclusive jurisdiction of provincial governments in the field of education, and due to wide cultural and demographic differences, that the implementation of the foregoing principle would be defined by each province.¹⁸⁹

The next day, Premier Lougheed and the Minister of Education, J. Koziak, released a statement expressing joint support for the Premiers' Conference Communiqué.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵Correspondence, B. L. Stringham to G. Ouellette, Secretary-Treasurer District #2665, 6 November 1974.

¹⁸⁶Swift Report, p. 27.

¹⁸⁷Correspondence C. Croteau and F. Mercier to J. Koziak; B. Chartrand to J. Koziak, October 1978.

¹⁸⁸Correspondence, J. Koziak to B. Chartrand, November 1978.

¹⁸⁹Final Communiqué, Premiers' Conference, Montreal, 23 February 1978.

¹⁹⁰Joint Statement by P. Lougheed and J. Koziak, 24 February 1978.

At this point the Minister was confronted by two principles, both of which his government supported, but which were seemingly in conflict at Bonnyville: (a) local autonomy for school Boards in those matters delegated to them, and (b) support for French language education for the francophone minority.

Some Local Perceptions of Intervention. To conclude this final section of the historical overview, it is worth noting some of the local attitudes that had developed among local school jurisdiction officials. Two respondents have been quoted at length, one dealing with feelings toward the Ministers of the period and the second referring to Department of Education officials.

A long serving superintendent of Division #46 commented on the involvement of Ministers of Education in the area's affairs:

A lot of the decisions . . . it was my experience were politically expedient decisions . . . what is the Minister going to do? He is going to make those decisions to ease political pressure. We, of course, were more interested in running our education system. We could appreciate the problems and pressure on the Minister. As time went on, it was very interesting to see how different Ministers would react to the situation. . . Very definitely some Ministers were more sympathetic to our situation. Some were more sympathetic to the Catholic population in the area. I'm sure a lot of the decisions were for political expediency.¹⁹¹

The perception conveyed is fairly clear. Here was a local administrator who, with his Board, was endeavouring to lead an education system in an area that until recently could be classed as economically deprived, and was struggling to modify and satisfy the educational demands of divergent groups of parents. The Minister was viewed as a reactor who responded to pressure, political expediency and personal interests but refused to take the political initiative needed to solve some of the fundamental governance problems of the area. For example, a Division #46 administrator stated that the Division repeatedly tried to have Ministers of Education force District #2665 to become a separate system.¹⁹² It was considered that "our [Division #46] problems would be completely different if the Catholic system was, as [is generally so] in the rest of the province, a separate system."¹⁹³ The thought was, that if the Division had access to the public assessment base in Bonnyville rather than the Protestant separate base through Duclos District #2, the additional financial resources may have enabled the Division to more readily agree to allowing its francophone pupils attend the Notre Dame schools. However, to

¹⁹¹S. Skuba, Interview, 3 November 1983.

¹⁹²As a public School District the Minister could quite properly have ordered the inclusion of District #2665 into Division #46, leaving the Catholic population of Bonnyville to petition for a new separate district.

¹⁹³S. Skuba, Interview.

"many of these issues they [Ministers of Education] would give a sympathetic ear but would say it was not within present legislation. Our comment always was that legislation is made to be changed."¹⁹⁴ Of course, what was often required was not so much legislative change, but political will on the part of the Minister to seriously address the root problems of educational governance in the Bonnyville area.

The former superintendent of the Division drew a distinction between educational and political decisions. He indicated that Divisional personnel often considered Ministerial decisions as almost another set of difficulties that had to be surmounted if the local system was to function even tolerably well. He felt that Ministerial support could not be counted upon even when operating within Departmental regulations.

A former chairman of Division #46 also spoke of the dysfunctional role played, at least in his eyes, by some Departmental officials.

. . . we had a history of ten years preceding throughout the 70's where I personally had become quite disturbed with several of the consultants from the Department of Education. . . In fact, we came to quite harsh words on several occasions, which I'm not normally given to. Quite publicly we got into some really tough altercations, partly I believe, because several of the consultants at that time, who were coming out, did not have a true grasp of the situation which we had in that community. They did think it could be quite simple. "All you have to do is this." "What are you arguing about?" As I said, there was no really simple answers to the problems that were there. They were very deep rooted problems. For some of these people, when they came out with off the cuff solutions, we got quite disturbed with them. As a result we [Division #46 trustees] . . . had certainly lost any feeling of confidence with these individuals for them to come up and truly assist reconciliation between the two groups.¹⁹⁵

Apparently, disillusionment with Department of Education officials was not limited to the officials of Bonnyville Division #46. The Divisional chairman indicated that his counterpart in Bonnyville, the chairman of District #2665, as well as other #2665 trustees, expressed similar feelings towards intervention by Departmental officials:

In talking to some of the Board members and the chairman of #2665, who I knew quite well . . . I found that they were feeling the same way. While on one side we were convinced that those individuals from the Minister's department were coming out and doing their best to shaft us to the benefit of our opposition, I found out that #2665 was blaming them in exactly the same way. And so it was sort of an untenable position for those people.¹⁹⁶

Thus, in early 1979, while considerable progress had been made in co-operation between the two Bonnyville jurisdictions, the underlying difficulties that beset education in the area had not been addressed. The area's 5444 school pupils (1036 attended Medley S. D. #5029

¹⁹⁴S. Skuba, Interview.

¹⁹⁵A. Edstrom, Interview.

¹⁹⁶A. Edstrom, Interview.

schools at the Cold Lake Military Base) were under the control of nine jurisdictions. This jurisdictional fragmentation, together with the basic problems associated with the provision of French language education for francophone pupils living in Division #46, and the ensuing financial implications the transfer of such students to District #2665 schools would have for the Division, had not been tackled. In response to the suggestion by the researcher that provincial interventions never addressed the underlying problems, the chairman of District #2665 commented:

Quite true. And they [departmental officials] would never come and solve a problem. They would say this and that and leave it up to the local school boards to settle their differences. And they never really did.¹⁹⁷

Despite the considerable improvement in relations between Division #46 and District #2665 by the end of the 1970's, problems remained unresolved largely because of the jurisdictional and financial structures that had been imposed in the past by the province and within which both Boards had to function each to its optimal advantage. The Boards appeared to have made considerable efforts to make the best of the situation. The transportation rights of each Board within its own jurisdiction were respected and the establishment of the Regional High School District had contributed to co-operation at board level. A District trustee observed:

On many items we were getting along, especially since we had Bonnyville Central High School. This was a thing that we had in common. Therefore, this helped to settle other matters.¹⁹⁸

However, individuals in the area remained dissatisfied with the opportunity their children had for French language and Catholic education. These people were continuing to direct their complaints to the Minister. It was to such a dissatisfied and unsettled educational environment that there came news of the planned, major oil-sands development with its expected demographic and financial impact upon the area's educational services.

¹⁹⁷C. Vincent, Interview.

¹⁹⁸C. Vincent, Interview.

V. THE STRUCTURING AND CONDUCT OF THE CONSULTANCY PROCESS

In this chapter, the Ministerial decision to conduct a wide ranging inquiry into all aspects of education in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area and the process utilized in the conduct of the inquiry are discussed. The chapter has been divided into three sections. First, the factors that influenced the Minister to establish a Ministerial Advisory Committee for the purpose of inquiring into the delivery of educational services in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area are outlined. In the second section, the formation of the Committee, the definition of its purposes and the selection of the Sage Institute of Canada as the external consultants to the Committee are described. This section concludes with a presentation of some local perceptions pertaining to the selection of the Sage Institute as the consultants. The third part of the chapter contains an overview of the Sage Analysis process, an outline of the application of that process in the Bonnyville study and a summary of the Institute's Report to the Minister of Education.¹⁹⁹ Some evaluative comments on the worth of the Sage study conclude the chapter.

A. A Ministerial Advisory Committee : Background

Soon after assuming office following the Alberta provincial election of March 1979, the new Minister of Education, D. L. King, was confronted by the unresolved controversies emanating from the Bonnyville area. Francophones living outside the boundaries of District #2665 were for the most part still denied access to the schooling many of them deemed most suitable for their children. Denial was often difficult for families to understand when in many cases Divisional buses transporting high school students to Bonnyville passed by. A lack of trust between the two Bonnyville jurisdictions had led to the development of two, uncoordinated bus systems within the 250 square kilometres of District #2665. The Division continued to be denied access to what it saw as its legitimate revenue in the town of Bonnyville. While cooperation had been achieved in the conduct of the Bonnyville Centralized High School, Regional S.D. #4 was an uneasy alliance.

¹⁹⁹Sage Institute of Canada, *The Future of Education in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre Area of Alberta*. (Alberta Education: Planning and Research, 1980.)

In 1979 examples of these difficulties now demanded the attention of the new Minister.

The Isley Correspondence

On 28 March 1979 the newly elected MLA for Bonnyville and former principal of the Bonnyville Centralized High School, Ernest Isley, wrote two letters to the Minister of Education.²⁰⁰

The first letter was focused upon problems concerning the Bonnyville Centralized High School, and sought an official Departmental investigation into the operations of Bonnyville R.S.D. #4 and its high school. Isley wrote

It is just a matter of time until there is another political disruption in our local education system. Probably the sooner it comes to a head and we clear the air the easier it will be to prepare an educational system for the impending rapid growth.

He noted that a group of concerned parents had submitted a letter of complaint to previous Bonnyville MLA D. Hansen and later had also delivered a petition to the former Minister of Education.²⁰¹ These complaints were part of a wider debate that had surfaced in the Regional District in regard to the educational philosophy of the high school. A number of trustees, seemingly including the chairman, Dr. J. Bugeaud, together with some parents disapproved of the large measure of freedom and personal responsibility given to students while Isley had been principal. On the other hand, there were those who approved of the philosophy, were angry at the way a majority of the Board had treated Isley thereby causing his resignation, and desired that the philosophy espoused and developed by Isley and his staff be translated into Board policy. The spokesman for the parents' group had written to the former MLA:

Bugeaud admitted that although the Board of Trustees consented to the educational philosophy of the school principal, Mr. Ernie Isley, and his competent teaching staff, the board has failed, in seven long years, to produce a written policy of education binding upon the eventual successors of the principal, the superintendent in charge of the school at any given time, and the Board of Trustees of the regional school district in future years.²⁰²

In the Brief to the Minister of Education, submitted after Isley's resignation, the group added:

We can only conclude, that the Board's failure to do so, is a deliberate attempt to change the educational philosophy of this school, whenever it so wishes without consultation with the school administrator (principal) and his staff.²⁰³

²⁰⁰Correspondence, E. D. Isley to D. L. King, 28 March 1979.

²⁰¹Correspondence, K. Mueller to D. Hansen, 8 May 1978; Brief by K. Mueller on behalf of parent group to J. Koziak, June 1978.

²⁰²Correspondence, K. Mueller to D. Hansen.

²⁰³Correspondence, K. Mueller to J. Koziak.

In his letter written nine months after the Brief to the Minister, Isley went on to comment that in the intervening time there had been a thirty percent turnover in teachers after very stable staffing for the first seven years of the school, a hundred percent turnover in secretarial support staff, allegations of student assaults, teacher dissatisfaction and fiscal concerns.

In the second of his letters to the Minister, Isley discussed accessibility to bilingual education in the area. After commenting that the boundaries of District #2665 extended only approximately five kilometres east of Bonnyville, Isley laid the blame for the area's conflicts over transportation with provincial funding regulations and asked about accessibility funding to (a) cover transportation costs and (b) protect a school jurisdiction, at least partially, against a loss of funds when its students attended school in another jurisdiction. He suggested these proposals could apply where "distinctively different types of educational programs are involved" and bussing distances involved were reasonable.²⁰⁴

On the 11 April 1979, the Minister sent Isley's correspondence, together with Mueller's letter and brief, to Deputy Minister of Education, E. K. Hawkesworth, with the comment:

Attached is the correspondence which you and I discussed on the telephone. Could you please review this next week in terms of the broad implications for reorganization.²⁰⁵

For whatever reasons, Isley's representations to the Minister appear to have struck a responsive cord. What the Minister specifically had in mind when he used the term "reorganization" is unknown. But it might reasonably be surmised that with benefit of the detailed briefing he would certainly have received from Isley, who knew the educational scene in Bonnyville intimately, the Minister could have very quickly concluded that a reorganization of governance and district boundaries was basic to a resolution of many of the area's educational conflicts. Also, the idea of a Departmental inquiry into problems in education in the area had certainly been discussed between Isley and the Minister, probably early in April 1979. The **Bonnyville Nouvelle** on 17 April published a front page article outlining the parental concerns that Isley had expressed in his letter to the Minister.²⁰⁶ The article quoted the local MLA as saying that he expected to meet with the Minister to discuss the terms of reference for a Departmental investigation of the complaints. It went on to quote Isley as saying "the probe may examine other matters facing the local education system such as the transportation

²⁰⁴Correspondence, E. Isley to D. King, 28 March 1979.

²⁰⁵Memorandum, D. King to E. Hawkesworth, 11 April 1979.

²⁰⁶28 March 1979.

problem between the two jurisdictions."²⁰⁷

The Minister forwarded the Isley correspondence to the Department with a request that the matter raised be reviewed.

Dr. B. L. Stringham, the Director of Field Services, prepared a reply.²⁰⁸ Dr. Stringham suggested a number of possible directions that a detailed study of the educational needs of the area might take, including opportunity for input from local boards and community groups. He suggested that the following be considered: (1) a complete description and assessment of current educational programs, (2) examination of the likely impact on the school system of population growth, (3) examination of how tax revenues from oil based industrial development could be equitably distributed, (4) the possible need for boundary revisions, (5) the provision of bilingual services in the area, and (6) an examination of the advisability of combining some jurisdictions.

Francophone Pressures

On the same day that the Minister requested his Deputy Minister to assess the Isley correspondence, S. Dallaire, President, Association Canadienne-Francaise de l'Alberta - regionale de Bonnyville, wrote to the Minister seeking his intervention on behalf of francophones in the Fort Kent area who were experiencing difficulty in obtaining Divisional transportation to Bonnyville:

...[We] believe that the Fort Kent situation contradicts the spirit of the "best efforts approach" adopted by Alberta's government.²⁰⁹ Our regional association believes that the principle of local autonomy does in fact prevent parents from availing themselves of the right to choose the language of instruction for their children. In fact, the interest of the division board, in this case the board of Bonnyville Division #46, comes into conflict with both parental expectations and the spirit of government policy.²¹⁰

In what appears to have been a concerted campaign to seek Ministerial intervention, two days earlier the President of the Association Canadienne-Francaise de l'Alberta also wrote to the Minister on behalf of the Fort Kent parents.²¹¹ After acknowledging the difficulties inherent in the situation for Division #46 and the government's goodwill to ensure a "best

²⁰⁷Bonnyville Nouvelle, 17 April 1979, p.1.

²⁰⁸Memorandum, B. L. Stringham to D. King, 18 April 1979.

²⁰⁹This refers to the acceptance by the Alberta government of the 1978 Premiers' Conference resolution previously discussed.

²¹⁰Correspondence, S. Dallaire to D. King, 11 April 1979.

²¹¹According to a memorandum from P. A. Lamoureux, Director, Language Services Branch to J. Hrabi, Assistant Deputy Minister (Instruction), 8 May 1979, there were five families and sixteen pupils involved in the 1979 Fort Kent conflict.

efforts" policy, Dr. R. G. Motut stated:

However, we are repeatedly encountering refusals at the local board levels because most boards have rigid policies governing the freedom of movement of students outside their jurisdiction. Divisional boards have been drawn up in such a way that our group, for all practical purposes, finds itself sorely divided and unable to fill classes because of small numbers. This problem has plagued us since the very beginning of larger divisions . . . The Fort Kent parents, as well as many others, strongly believe that their cause is a just one and look to you for a solution.²¹²

Bonnyville S.D. #2665 added its voice on behalf of the Fort Kent parents. It passed the following motion on 25 April and forwarded it to the Minister:

Whereas there are parents, residing outside the Bonnyville School District #2665 boundaries, who wish a Catholic and/or bilingual education for their children, that this board go on record as declaring deplorable and totally unsatisfactory the existing funding formulae and regulations which prohibit students, who wish to obtain a Catholic and/or bilingual education, from being transported to our schools either by our jurisdiction or by Bonnyville School Division #46, on existing routes or otherwise.

In an accompanying letter, the District superintendent recommended that "an examination of this situation be made and preventive measures be taken."²¹³ He argued that because, in the District's view, provincial funding regulations made the Fort Kent problems so difficult to solve locally, resolution of the situation was a provincial responsibility.

Within the Department of Education these letters of concern from members of the francophone community were passed to Dr. P. A. Lamoureux of the Languages Services Branch. Dr. Lamoureux had at one time been on the staff of the Fort Kent school.

On 3 May, Dr. Lamoureux informed Dr. J. Hrabi, Assistant Deputy Minister (Instruction), that the course of action he had recommended six months earlier "to bring matters to a head" was still viable.²¹⁴ At that time, when asked by the Deputy Minister's office to comment on the difficulties francophones living in Divisional areas experienced in obtaining French language education for their children, Dr. Lamoureux also had acknowledged the complexity of resolving a situation involving . . .

a conflict between the aspirations of a specific group and the legal decision made by a school board interested in maintaining a school program in an already small school.²¹⁵

After noting the 1969 Ministerial directive, the conclusions of W. Worbets' 1975 transportation study and the Alberta government's acceptance of the 1978 Montreal Premiers' Conference

²¹²Correspondence, R. G. Motut to D. King, 9 April 1979.

²¹³Correspondence, M. Beaudoin, Superintendent District #2665 to D. King, 25 April 1979.

²¹⁴Memorandum, P. A. Lamoureux to J. S. Hrabi, 3 May 1979. The former recommendation had been contained in a memorandum P. A. Lamoureux to J. Jeffrey, Assistant to the Deputy Minister, 3 November 1978.

²¹⁵Lamoureux to Jeffrey.

Final Communiqué, Dr. Lamoureux had cautioned that (a) the Minister do nothing contrary to the intent of the Final Communiqué, and (b) any attempt to pressure the Division into reviewing its decisions on the matter would be viewed as an overriding of local autonomy and thus counter productive. He had then advanced the idea of

a task force or committee comprised of interested persons to grapple with the issue of present legislation and structures on a provincial basis.²¹⁶

This structural problem had arisen because provincial policy concerning French language education was correctly viewed as being in conflict with the statutory decision-making autonomy of school boards.

The A-Quest Group

Meanwhile, many parents in Grand Centre were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the administration of their schools by Division #46. A meeting of approximately 120 parents in 1977 formed the A-Quest group to agitate for improved educational services. Concern centred on what were perceived to be serious inadequacies in the physical facilities and program availability in the elementary, junior high and senior high schools. These included the poor physical condition of the elementary school, the lack of any Home Economics and Industrial Arts facilities and programs at Grand Centre Junior High and only on a very limited scale at Cold Lake, the unsatisfactory library facility at the senior high school and a feeling that the pupil-teacher ratio was unacceptably high.²¹⁷ Former A-Quest executive members made the following response to a question on the issues that led to the formation of A-Quest:

We were hearing constantly that we don't have enough teachers, we don't have enough programs, we don't have materials to work with in the schools, we don't have good facilities . . . They were all important.²¹⁸

In view of the growth of population in the Grand Centre-Cold Lake area, it was considered by many that their tax dollars were being used to subsidize Bonnyville area schools and that the east end was underrepresented on the Divisional Board.²¹⁹ A well organized and articulate group of professional people, who had developed both long and short term aims, set about pressuring the Divisional Board and the Department of Education through personal representation, letters and their local trustee. The group's approach was explained in the

²¹⁶Lamoureux to Jeffrey.

²¹⁷R. Piper, Interview, 23 November 1983.

²¹⁸H. Thaleshtar, Interview, 23 November 1983.

²¹⁹H. Thaleshtar, Interview.

following terms:

We were involving the Department as well as the Board to make sure both parties know what is going on at this end rather than just involving the Board and the Department not knowing anything. We tried to keep them both involved to get the best results.²²⁰

The executive of A-Quest met with Department of Education representatives, Division #46 administrative staff and the local MLA in May 1978. The concerns expressed in a report of the meeting to the Department of Education may be summarized as follows:

1. Financing Education

- (a) Concern that Cold Lake-Grand Centre did not get a fair share of the funds available.

- (b) Demand for advanced planning and front end funding to prepare for the anticipated population growth resulting from oil based economic development.

2. Complaints about school program inadequacies and higher pupil-teacher ratios in the east end.

3. Complaints about overcrowding and need for building program.

4. Concern over representation

- (a) There was a movement for the establishment of an independent school division based on Grand Centre and Cold Lake.

- (b) A feeling that Grand Centre did not have a sufficient voice in Division #46 affairs.²²¹

It was noted in the report that the A-Quest executive passed a motion asking for an "increase to the legal limit of the number of division trustees." Information was to be sought from the Department of Education regarding "alternatives and procedures to follow in forming an independent school jurisdiction in the northern portion of the Bonnyville School Division."²²²

The possibility of forming an independent school jurisdiction in the Grand Centre-Cold Lake area generated a measure of parental hostility in the other areas of the Division. Ardmore parents forwarded a petition to the Minister of Education to "object most vehemently"²²³ and the Secretary-Treasurer of the Iron River School Association wrote that "we strongly feel this is not necessary at this time."²²⁴ However, one executive member of A-Quest maintained that the request for an independent school jurisdiction was always viewed as only a tactic to gain

²²⁰Interview.

²²¹Memorandum, E. Olstad to W. Worbets, 8 May 1978.

²²²E. Olstad to W. Worbets.

²²³Petition by Ardmore ratepayers and parents to the Minister of Education, June 1978.

²²⁴Correspondence, D. Ulanicki to J. Koziak, 27 June 1978.

attention. She stated:

. . . initially we hit them with, let's divide the district, because we thought that our tax dollars were not spent wisely. We were supporting the other end but we were collecting the tax dollars from here . . . We knew that it was not realistic to divide the district . . . But just to get the attention right away we went that way.²²⁵

On the other hand, the representation issue was seriously pursued, and at the request of Division #46, E. Olstad and R. Penrice from the Field Services Branch of the Department of Education were appointed in June 1978 to conduct a study of sub-divisional boundaries and representation.²²⁶ By the middle of 1979, the prospect of Ministerial intervention in the area, and the unknown patterns of population distribution that may occur due to oil development, resulted in first, a suspension, and then a termination of the twelve-month old study.

The A-Quest group seemed to consider the new Minister of Education, D. King to be more responsive to their representations than had been the previous Minister. The then Secretary of A-Quest commented:

. . . we petitioned him and Dave King came out here and met with our group and sat down and talked to us and took information with him. . . he did take time out to meet with the parent group and it was a very good meeting. He was very responsive.²²⁷

A second A-Quest executive member also commented very positively on the response the group got from the new Minister in May 1979, stating that, ". . . there is no doubt he was concerned."²²⁸ Twelve months earlier in May 1978, the A-Quest executive made a submission to the provincial Cabinet during its tour of Grand Centre. On that occasion executive members expressed their anger that the then Minister of Education, J. Koziak, from whom they had had virtually no response, absented himself from the discussions despite their request that he be present.²²⁹

The Division was very much aware of many of the facilities and program related complaints raised by A-Quest. The Division's Brief to Cabinet in May 1978 contained reference to the accommodation problems at Grand Centre High School, the need for Home Economics and Industrial Arts facilities and vocational programs at Grand Centre Junior High, and the demand for support staff and counselling services in Divisional schools. Also, the whole matter of advance planning and funding for school building construction was raised. A-Quest's demands centred on one area, but the Division had to take a system wide perspective and at the

²²⁵H. Thalesvar, Interview.

²²⁶Noted in Brief from Bonnyville S. Div.#46 to Provincial Cabinet, 28 May 1978.

²²⁷R. Piper, Interview.

²²⁸H. Thalesvar, Interview.

²²⁹R. Piper, Interview, 23 November 1983.

same time was struggling to control a large deficit.²³⁰ The fact that many A-Quest supporters were in professional occupations was in contrast to the rural and small town orientation of most of the Division's electors. Much of the difficulty between the Division and the A-Quest group may be attributed to the fact that these people were demanding a level of facilities and programs the Division could not afford and for which it did not qualify.²³¹

The Esso Project and Local Concerns

When the Imperial Oil Company announced in early 1978 its plans to develop a \$4.7 billion oil-sands project in the Cold Lake area, the local school boards became very concerned over the provision and financing of the required expansion of facilities and programs. Their concerns were indicated clearly in a joint submission five Boards placed before the Energy Resources Conservation Board in September 1978.²³²

In their Brief, the Boards referred to the demands for funding Special Education programs, vocational training facilities and programs, fine arts programs, guidance and counselling services, and support staff. In addition, they were greatly disquieted that "present regulations do not facilitate construction of facilities in anticipation of increased enrolments."²³³ The Brief concluded:

The school boards in this area wish publicly to voice their position that front-end funding for the establishment of new programs, facilities and services is essential.²³⁴

This perspective was reinforced in a Supplementary Brief presented to the Energy Resources Conservation Board in November 1978 on behalf of the five school Boards by a consulting firm. The concerns of the Boards were summed up in the following manner:

The primary question which is posed, is who is going to pay for the educational costs which arise directly from the project . . .

The issue of who is going to provide planning and who will pay for it needs to be decided immediately in order for school districts to be ready for even the first small influx of people . . .²³⁵

²³⁰At 31 December 1978, the Division had an accumulated deficit of \$194,000.

²³¹A. Ryll, Interview.

²³²Bonnyville Regional S.D.#4, Bonnyville S.D.#2665, Bonnyville S.Div.#46, Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64 and Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67.

²³³Brief to Energy Resources Conservation Board, Grand Centre, 5-15 September 1978, p. 3.

²³⁴Brief, p. 4.

²³⁵Supplementary Brief to Energy Resources Conservation Board by E. Franzoni and G. Hundleby, Canadian Educational and Psychological Consultants, 3 November 1978.

In December 1978, the superintendent of Division #46 had written to the Department of Education requesting

. . . assistance from departmental personnel regarding a study on school facilities, building needs, utilization and needs assessment in our school jurisdiction. The present level of growth and the potential development in the area pending government approval for the Esso Project has made such a study our number one priority.²³⁶

The Education Ad Hoc Committee for New Projects

The Ad Hoc Committee for New Projects was a response by the Deputy Minister of Education to suggestions from A. N. Craig, chairman of the Cold Lake Coordinating Committee, a government coordinating committee of senior government officials at the Assistant Deputy Minister level responsible to the Economic Planning and Resource Development Committee of Cabinet. The Cold Lake Coordinating Committee had been established by a Cabinet decision on 28 August 1978.²³⁷

In October, A. N. Craig had asked the Department of Education for "details of previous, current or future planned departmental studies involving the area."²³⁸ In response, the Director of Planning and Research indicated that he was "not aware of any existing studies" and that "no direct capital or operational expenditures for the area exist in our budget." However, Dr. Fenske went on to suggest that

. . . some preliminary analysis should be done on the present school population in the area and the potential population impact on existing facilities. Possibly an internal study team representing Buildings, Field Services and Planning and Research could do the preliminary analysis.²³⁹

The following day Dr. Hawkesworth adopted this suggestion and, in a reply to the chairman of the Cold Lake Coordinating Committee, stated:

Because of the magnitude of the proposed development [at Cold Lake] I would be prepared to strike a committee representing appropriate branches of this department for the purpose of estimating potential needs of education authorities in the area.²⁴⁰

In his reply, Craig indicated his Committee's "interest in your response and ask that you consider proceeding with your internal committee."²⁴¹

²³⁶ Correspondence, S. Skuba to B. L. Stringham, 19 December 1978.

²³⁷ The Department of Education was not among the departments represented on the committee. (Memorandum, E. K. Hawkesworth to J. Koziak, 12 September 1978.)

²³⁸ Memorandum, A. N. Craig to E. K. Hawkesworth, 11 October 1978.

²³⁹ Memorandum, M. R. Fenske to E. K. Hawkesworth, 16 October 1978.

²⁴⁰ Memorandum, E. K. Hawkesworth to A. N. Craig, 17 October 1978.

²⁴¹ Memorandum, A. N. Craig to E. K. Hawkesworth, 31 October 1978.

As a result, the Education Ad Hoc Committee for New Projects was established within the Department of Education in January 1979. It was chaired by Dr. S. N. Odynak, and included Dr. J. Thiessen, Secretary, E. Olstad, R. Penrice and W. Worbets from Field Services Branch and Dr. J. W. Kulba, Director of School Buildings Branch.²⁴²

The Committee was given three functions:

1. To monitor the provision of educational services (programs, facilities, financing) during the development and operation of new resource development projects.
2. To develop reaction to position papers, such as Environmental Impact Assessment reports, which come from Departments of Environment and Municipal Affairs.
3. To facilitate the provision of education services.

In addition to the Cold Lake proposed development, the Committee had responsibilities for two other development projects.²⁴³ It was in association with this Committee that R. Penrice and E. Olstad were appointed in February 1979 to undertake a facilities study in conjunction with the local boards.²⁴⁴ This was additional to the boundaries and transportation study that they were already engaged in, and by April, Penrice was able to report to the Committee that the facilities survey was "progressing well."²⁴⁵

The Ad Hoc Committee met monthly until September and during that time appears to have taken no further initiatives in relation to the Cold Lake area. At its September meeting the desirability of further action was discussed. It was considered that:

1. A package -- staff, enrolments, costs and other relevant information -- be prepared for presentation to the boards in the Cold Lake region, as part of a possible visit by members of the Committee to those boards.
2. Something would have to be done about school facilities [in Bonnyville, Cold Lake and Grand Centre].

²⁴²Memorandum, S. N. Odynak to E. K. Hawkesworth, 22 January 1979.

²⁴³Alsands project north of Fort McMurray and the Blue Ridge Lumber project in north western Alberta.

²⁴⁴Education Ad Hoc Committee for New Projects, Minutes 7 February 1979, (Correspondence E. Olstad to five Bonnyville area boards, 28 February 1979.)

²⁴⁵Ad Hoc Committee, Minutes, 11 April 1979.

Ministerial Response

By early May 1979, the idea of a study project to review educational facilities, services and programs in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area of Alberta had emerged from several sources. The local Boards had identified the need for forward planning in their submission to the Environmental Resources Conservation Board in November 1978 and in December 1978 Division #46 had requested Departmental assistance with a facilities study. Field Services Branch and the Ad Hoc Committee for New Projects had appointed E. Olstad and R. Penrice in February 1979 to commence such study in cooperation with the local Boards. Simultaneously, the same two officers were working on a review of sub-divisional boundaries and representation in the Division in response to agitation from the A-Quest group in Grand Centre.

Independently Dr. Lamoureux had suggested in November 1978 and again in April 1979, albeit with a province-wide focus, a study committee to examine language legislation which would provide a legislative settlement of the Fort Kent type situation to allow pupils access to bilingual programs in another jurisdiction.

Against this background, in April 1979, Dr. Stringham had advanced his proposal for a broadly based study of education in the Bonnyville area.

On 4 May, the Minister wrote to Dr. Motut of A.F.C.A. stating:

I am now aware of this situation [Fort Kent] and hope that a satisfactory solution may be achieved through persuasion to the satisfaction of persons concerned but especially for the educational benefits of the children involved.

In this response the Minister appeared to be indicating at least two things. First, there seemed to be an acceptance of the fact that a real problem existed at Bonnyville. Second, his preferred approach to resolving the conflicts was through "persuasion to the satisfaction of persons concerned."

To address these various problems and attempt to resolve the area's conflicts through persuasion and agreement, the Minister accepted the suggestion of a cooperative study along the lines that Dr. Stringham had suggested in his memorandum of 18 April 1979.

Interestingly, at this time it was not so much the prospect of large scale economic development in the area that focused the Minister's attention on the Bonnyville situation as the language issue, public conflict over the most desirable educational philosophy for the Centralized High School and the area's jurisdictional fragmentation. These seemingly motivated

his decision to visit the Bonnyville area and offer to the area Boards a wide-ranging study to address all issues of concern. The prospect of the Esso development and the issues it raised (e.g. distribution of assessment, provision of facilities) provided the Minister with opportunity to approach what he considered more important matters. In correspondence with the researcher, the Minister of Education indicated the following in regard to his thinking on the matter:

There were many factors, such as ones noted in your letter [conflict over access to French/Catholic education; A-Quest and dissatisfaction in Cold Lake/Grand Centre; criticism concerning Bonnyville Centralized High School], which were influential in my decision to establish the advisory committee. Cumulatively, these factors, in addition to the many problems associated with fragmentation, were more influential than the prospect of the plant, which really afforded the opportunity to deal with more important problems.²⁴⁶

On 3 May, in a memorandum circulated to W. Worbets, Associate Director of Field Services whose field responsibilities included the Bonnyville area, Dr. Lamoureux the Director of Language Services and Dr. Kulba, the Director of School Buildings Branch, it was announced that the Minister would visit the Bonnyville area on 16 and 17 May 1979.²⁴⁷ It is of interest that Dr. Kulba was a recipient of the memo. This seems to indicate that while facilities planning would not appear to have been a dominant factor in the decision by the Minister to give attention to the area, nevertheless, it was a concern of the Cold Lake Coordinating Committee as well as of the local jurisdictions. It provided an additional reason for Ministerial attention, one that enjoyed public acceptability in the area.

Ministerial Visit to Bonnyville

On 14 May 1979, the Minister was given a detailed briefing on matters likely to be raised with him in the course of his forthcoming visit to the Bonnyville area. In the briefing document, a number of issues were identified by Department of Education officials. An overall issue of concern to all boards in the area was the impact of the Esso resources proposal on school facilities, instructional programs, the social and economic structure of the communities, community health services and the need for front-end financing so that facilities would be available when the population influx commenced. Concern at what were perceived as the negative aspects of such a population influx was also widespread.

²⁴⁶Correspondence, D. King to R. Iles, 1 March 1984.

²⁴⁷Memorandum, J. Hrabi to W. Worbets, P. Lamoureux and J. Kulba, 3 May 1979.

The document contained a listing of the following important issues for Bonnyville S. Div. #46.

1. The overcrowding of the Duclos school and negotiations then underway with the Town Council for an additional school site in the south-eastern part of the town.
2. The under-utilization of the Fort Kent school and the unacceptability to Bonnyville parents of having their children bussed to Fort Kent.
3. Public pressure for the expansion of facilities at Grand Centre junior and senior high schools.
4. Pressure from francophone and Catholic parents outside District #2665 boundaries to, nevertheless, attend that District's schools because the District offered a program in French whereas instruction in French was limited at Fort Kent and Duclos.
5. Questioning of the appropriateness of the existing tuition and transportation agreements between Division #46 and District #2665, but "boards are reluctant to reopen negotiations for fear that serious controversies which have been dormant during that last several years will be resurrected."²⁴⁸
6. Dissatisfaction appeared to be growing over the 50-50 cost sharing formula for the operation of the Centralized High School.
7. As assessment increased in the Bonnyville area, there appeared to be increasing concern on the part of the Division over the distribution of this assessment between the public District and Duclos Separate.
8. Some parents in Grand Centre were still calling for the establishment of an independent school division in the Grand Centre-Cold Lake area. This idea had been presented to Cabinet in June 1978. It was noted that a Departmental team was presently studying sub-division representation in the Division.²⁴⁹
9. It was also noted that Division #46 had had an accumulated deficit of \$194,000 at the end of December 1978.
10. There had been concern expressed by some trustees that two teachers of District #4 employed at the Centralized High School were trustees of Division #46, one of District #4 parent boards.

²⁴⁸Briefing Document for Minister's visit to Bonnyville, 14 May 1979, p. 3.

²⁴⁹R. Penrice and E. Olstad.

The briefing document also contained a listing of issues pertinent to District #2665.

1. The District's acceptance of all students also meant that when students did not have the approval of their responsible school authority²⁵⁰ the District was unable to obtain local tuition payments.
2. District #2665 was a Catholic public district in an area where the proportion of non-Catholics was increasing and likely to increase even more rapidly if the oil-sands projects went ahead. Thus, there was a distinct possibility that within the foreseeable future, District #2665 could lose its francophone and Catholic identity.²⁵¹
3. The District was also reticent about reopening negotiations over tuition and transportation payments for fear of rekindling past antagonisms between itself and the Division.
4. The District was also concerned with teachers at the Centralized High School being trustees of Division #46.

Briefer details were given with respect to Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64 and Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67. Apart from both Boards having had healthy accumulated surpluses at 31 December 1978, it was noted that they preferred to operate within their own one school systems rather than seeking to negotiate shared use of Divisional facilities. Because of the contiguous nature of these two districts, amalgamation had been suggested previously. However, the pessimistic comment was made, "prospects do not look promising. Maintaining town identity is foremost in both cases."²⁵²

In relation to the Regional S.D. #4 it was noted that:

. . . It would appear that the high school is functioning well. New principal . . . implementing the board policy of closed school climate and more supervision [of students]. Board functioning harmoniously.

As subsequent events were to demonstrate, such an assessment was altogether too optimistic. The concerns expressed earlier by Isley and Mueller remained.

With such a background and briefing the Minister visited the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area on 16 and 17 May 1979. The purpose of the visit was to demonstrate Ministerial concern over the educational problems of the area. All operational jurisdictions in the area, including Medley and the Elizabeth Metis colony, then part of Northland S. Div.#61,

²⁵⁰Almost always Division #46.

²⁵¹It was [and is] almost impossible to prove legally who were Protestants by religious faith, especially in an increasingly secular society, and force them into the Separate District.

²⁵²Briefing Document, p. 3.

were visited. In addition, he met members of each of the three parent groups that had sought Ministerial intervention in regard to their concerns.²⁵³ However, in his discussions with the two Bonnyville Boards, the Minister chose not to address the particular issues raised by these parent groups, rather he focused upon the problems likely to accompany the pending economic development of the area.

Meeting with the trustees of Division #46, the Minister posed the problem of having a number of school jurisdictions in close proximity and the resultant duplication of services. He also raised the issue of how the assessment tax on the Esso plant should be distributed. Based on his ostensible concern with the equitable distribution of tax-revenue and the non-duplication of facilities, he inquired of the trustees, "I would like to know what is the possibility of a wide-ranging study on schooling and education in this part of the province?"²⁵⁴ Such a proposal also provided a response to the issues of concern raised by the trustees: front-end financing, expansion of facilities to accommodate sudden influx of school age population, assistance with research and planning and the need for a three year funding formula.

Similar concerns surfaced in the Minister's meeting with District #2665 trustees. Student population projections, front-end funding, the distribution of tax revenue from the oil-sands plants located in the Improvement District north of Division #46 boundary and the date of completion of the school facilities study being done for the area were the important issues. In addition, the financing of bilingual programs, transportation of students from outside the District's boundaries, concern with the likely need of increased resources for special education, and funding for a central office and education centre were discussed.²⁵⁵

At his meeting with the District, the Minister indicated that he wanted the Fort Kent transportation conflicts resolved locally. However, the **Bonnyville Nouvelle** reported that . . .

the Minister indicated that the solution the boards arrive at must be applicable to other areas of the province with similar problems.[Quoting Dr. Brosseau, the report continued]

"He wants a general solution that will be applicable across the province before he will accept it."

The trustees he added found this "very unrealistic."²⁵⁶

²⁵³1. The Grand Centre-Cold Lake parent group concerned with representation on the Divisional Board and facilities in Grand Centre schools. 2. The Bonnyville Regional High School parent group who focused on the impact of philosophical conflict at the school. 3. The Fort Kent group of francophone parents who were seeking divisional transportation of their children to District #2665 schools.

²⁵⁴From handwritten notes made at the meeting with the Minister by the Secretary-Treasurer of Division #46.

²⁵⁵Based on notes contained in Bonnyville S.D.#2665 Minutes, 18 May 1979.

²⁵⁶Dr. B. Brosseau, **Bonnyville Nouvelle**, 22 May, 1979, p. 2.

Nevertheless, the **Bonnyville Nouvelle** reported that "French-speaking parents seeking bilingual education for their children have his [the Minister's] support."²⁵⁷

It was also reported that the Minister did appear prepared to consider the suggestion advanced by District trustees "that the two boards [District #2665 and Division #46] have the same or co-terminous boundaries, in order to allow free interchange of students."²⁵⁸

Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64 also raised the issue of the distribution of assessment taxes from the oil-sands plants. Because of the town's picturesque location, some population projections indicated that the town may experience a higher growth rate than other centres. However, as a town based separate system, the Separate District would have no access to any tax assessment from the plant.

Other issues raised by District #64 concerned (a) the likely conflict in values between established Cold Lake families and the new arrivals brought by the oil industry, (b) legal and moral responsibility for Metis people (students from Elizabeth Colony attended St. Dominic's, Cold Lake after grade six) and (c) the responsibility for non-treaty Indians.²⁵⁹

To each of the Boards he visited, the Minister issued an invitation to participate in a "wide ranging study" to address issues that concerned the local Boards, parent groups and the Minister himself. As noted earlier, the Minister "sold" the study to the local Boards on the basis of their planning needs in the light of the expected economic development. But for him, the issues of access to French language instruction and governance were of greater significance. He saw the Esso project as affording "the opportunity to deal with more important problems," and "had great expectations that we could put some long-standing problems and conflicts behind us."²⁶⁰

Some Perceptions of the Ministerial Visit

While, as has already been noted in relation to the A-Quest group, parental perceptions regarding the Minister's visit were very positive, trustees appear to have been more cautious in their evaluations. A trustee of Division #46 expressed a view that appears to have been generally held by Divisional trustees: "The Minister has special attention in mind for this area,

²⁵⁷22 May 1979, p. 2.

²⁵⁸**Bonnyville Nouvelle**, 22 May 1979, p. 2.

²⁵⁹Taken from unsigned handwritten notes contained in the Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64 Minutes, 17 May 1979.

²⁶⁰D. King to R. Iles.

and his visit here last week is an indication of this."²⁶¹ Just what might result from the Minister's attention seemed to create an air of ominous uncertainty among Divisional trustees who realized that their Division stood to lose in any changes designed to address the several causes of parental dissatisfaction.

On the other hand, District #2665 trustee, Dr. B. Brosseau, also displayed some fairly negative feelings concerning the visit. He was reported as stating:

. . . that all major decisions will be made at the cabinet level, not by Mr. King, and that judging by previous cabinet decisions there won't be much change in policies or attitudes toward education.

It was just a fact-gathering tour. He's learning--and he's got a lot to learn.²⁶²

On a more positive note, Dr. Brosseau did acknowledge . . .

that the Minister has acted as a catalyst, especially by encouraging the district and the division boards to begin discussing the issue of Fort Kent parents who want their children to attend Bonnyville schools for Catholic or French education.²⁶³

Clearly, the Ministerial visit signalled to local trustees the possibility of change in the area's educational structures. In the press conference that concluded the two day visit, the Minister expressed a desire "to solve problems" and added that he "would be interested in moving fairly expeditiously." After referring to the common educational concerns of the area boards -- front-end funding, a tax sharing formula, avoidance of duplication of services and provision of special education -- he noted that:

. . . because of the historical circumstances many of the responses local people have made to problems have been on an ad hoc basis. They may have been adequate in their time and place, but now the combination of things is making administration difficult. Part of what I want to do is clear the decks.²⁶⁴

Inevitably, the unsettling nature of impending change gave rise to a measure of apprehension among those most affected.

²⁶¹Bonnyville Nouvelle, 22 May 1979, p. 9.

²⁶²Bonnyville Nouvelle, 22 May 1979, p. 9.

²⁶³Bonnyville Nouvelle, 22 May 1979, p. 9.

By September 1979, the two Boards did develop a transportation agreement that settled the Fort Kent difficulties. However, because it was limited to the Division's Fort Kent attendance area, it was not applicable to resolving similar disputes that emerged in the Ardmore area and which were still unresolved at the time of reorganization.

²⁶⁴Bonnyville Nouvelle, 22 May 1979, p. 11.

Invitation to the Boards

On 31 May 1979, the Minister wrote to each of the seven school Boards in the area formally "inviting participation in a wide ranging study of the future educational needs of Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area."²⁶⁵ In his letter which requested replies by 30 June 1979, the Minister listed the following study areas:

- capacity and utilization of present facilities
- alternatives in relation to additional school facilities (e.g. portables, permanent construction, joint use)
- front-end funding for physical facilities
- community use of schools
- local personnel resources
- assessment base
- pupil transportation
- school programs
- school jurisdictional boundaries

As an indication of his desire for a cooperative approach to problem solving and conflict resolution, the Minister indicated that the "study would be under the direction of a steering committee composed of representatives of all the local school jurisdictions and the Department of Education."²⁶⁶ The study would perform a "fact-finding function" to provide local boards with "an information base" and secondly, advise the Minister "on the best alternative courses of action."

In the letter the Minister invited each board to (a) participate, (b) comment on the parameters of the study, (c) express any qualifications to its participation, and (d) suggest additions or deletions to the proposed list of topics for study. It was suggested that a committee be structured during the summer with a commencement in the early fall and a completion expected in fifteen months. The letter concluded with, what appeared to be, an obscure reference to possible unilateral Ministerial action:

In the absence of cooperative activity, I am very concerned about the alternatives which we must face by necessity, due to the circumstances which will be imposed upon us.²⁶⁷

After visiting the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area, the Minister's concern with matters pertaining to governance was revealed in his subsequent request to the Department for "clarification of the legality" of the following:

(a) The several expansions of the boundaries of Duclos P.S.S.D.#2 and Bonnyville

²⁶⁵D. King to Chairman of Bonnyville S. Div.#46, Northland S. Div.#61, Bonnyville S.D.#2665, Medley S.D.#5029, Bonnyville R.S.D.#4, Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64 and Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67, 31 May 1979.

²⁶⁶D. King, 31 May 1979.

²⁶⁷D. King, 31 May 1979.

S.D. #2665,

(b) The possibility of trustees of Bonnyville R.S.D. #4 being directly elected,

(c) The amalgamation of Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D. #64 and Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D. #67.²⁶⁸

Even at this early stage, more than twelve months before reorganization, it appears that the Minister had already made up his mind to act and, in particular, to (a) reduce the number of jurisdictions in the area, and (b) resolve the conflict over access to bilingual education. The question that remained was one of how.

Responses from the Boards

All boards replied affirmatively, yet there was an element of reticence in most of the responses, excepting that from Northland S.Div. #61, which noted the small number of pupils it had in the area.²⁶⁹ Replying on behalf of Medley S.D. #5029, Major L. J. Tien, noted that his Board's participation was limited by the fact that the implementation of any recommendations would require Department of National Defence approval. He suggested that co-ordination and liaison among boards be added to the list of topics for study.²⁷⁰

The Board of Bonnyville R.S.D. #4 reflected concerns of both parent Boards. As well as suggesting that "religious study in school programs" be added to the list of study topics, the Board requested:

. . . clarification regarding the structure of the committee due to the fact that our area includes several small school jurisdictions. The term "steering" committee appears to suggest some degree of control. We anticipate that the committee will concentrate upon a study rather than controlling what the study team determines.²⁷¹

The last two sentences appear to reflect a concern of both Bonnyville Boards that the study might attempt to force them into change, where their independence and autonomy may be threatened.

Division #46 replied using the same terms as in the quotation given above from Regional School District #4. It was also suggested that the two Bonnyville Boards and the two east end Boards be given separate reports. This seemed to reflect the Division's understanding that the problems of the eastern end of the area were quite different from those of the

²⁶⁸Memorandum, J. Jeffrey to B. Morrison, Solicitor, Finance, Statistics and Legislation Branch, Department of Education, 4 June 1979.

²⁶⁹Correspondence, R. H. McKinnon to D. King, 12 June 1979.

²⁷⁰Correspondence, L. J. Tien to D. King, 21 June 1979.

²⁷¹Correspondence, A. Gault to D. King, 5 July 1979.

Bonnyville area. In addition, the Division was concerned over questions of representation on the committee. Its students represented over sixty-five percent of the total student population and it was concerned that the smaller jurisdictions were not over represented on the committee and exert undue influence.²⁷²

Superintendent Beaudoin, replying on behalf of District #2665 and Separate Districts #64 and #67, noted the following areas of reservation:

. . . some hesitation is expressed vis-a-vis the inter-relationship of the functions of the committee, its composition, the definition of concerns, common or otherwise [and] the treatment and disposition of the concerns by the committee.²⁷³

Then, surprisingly, after indicating the trustees' readiness to participate in the "fact-finding function", Beaudoin continued:

They [the trustees] believe they are less qualified to undertake the advisory function which depends largely on an analysis of the facts, the generation of alternatives, and the selection of the best solution for presentation to the Minister. This latter process demands expertise which they do not possess.²⁷⁴

The self-protective stance of District #2665, and to a lesser extent Separate Districts #64 and #67, was revealed in additional "hesitations" expressed by superintendent Beaudoin. There was concern at public (i.e. non-board) participation in the Committee which had been indicated in articles published in the **Bonnyville Nouvelle** in the last two weeks of June 1979. The identification and definition of problems could create difficulties because of the different perspectives of the interested parties. In addition, it was suggested that progress reports be given to the participating Boards on a regular basis, that final recommendations be "approved by individual boards prior to forwarding them to the Minister", provision be made for a minority report and the problems of Catholic boards be addressed separately to those of the public boards. Beaudoin concluded his letter by indicating very clearly the value priorities espoused by the three Catholic districts. After referring to the Minister's request for cooperation he continued:

While agreeing that cooperation is highly desirable and even essential, my Boards view cooperation as another mechanism by which they will accomplish their long term objectives, rather than as an end in and of itself. Where the mechanism causes them to deviate from their purpose, another way must be found.

Thus, albeit with some reservations, by early July the Minister had formal agreement from each of the seven school jurisdictions to participate in "a wide ranging study of the future

²⁷²G. Kuschminder, Interview, 1 February 1984.

²⁷³Correspondence, M. Beaudoin to D. King, 28 June 1979.

²⁷⁴M. Beaudoin, 28 June 1979.

educational needs of the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area."²⁷⁵

B. The Ministerial Advisory Committee: Operations

Although the Minister had broadly indicated the composition of the Advisory Committee and a possible structure for the proposed study in his letter to the Boards,²⁷⁶ considerable work was required to operationalize these ideas.

Following receipt of replies from the area Boards, no further advancement of the Minister's study proposal seems to have occurred during the summer. Despite the Minister's earlier statement that the Committee would be formed during the summer,²⁷⁷ it was not until the second week of October 1979 that action was initiated.

In this section, the formation of the Ministerial Advisory Committee and the definition of its purposes are described. The processes leading to the selection of the Sage Institute as the external consultant and a range of local perceptions regarding that selection are also outlined.

Formation of the Committee

In response to an urgent request from the Minister, a Departmental committee was assembled to make preparation for the proposed study that had been offered to the Bonnyville area Boards and which they had accepted. Chaired by J. Jeffrey, Assistant to the Deputy Minister, the committee included the Director of Planning Services, Dr. M. R. Fenske, the newly appointed Director of Field Services, Dr. E. A. Torgunrud, three experienced Field Administrative Officers, W. T. Worbets, S. J. Clarke and R. Penrice, and Dr. S. J. Thiessen, Planning Consultant.

The two stage study proposal that had been suggested by Planning Services and outlined in the Minister's letter to the Boards, 31 May 1979, was retained. Separation of the descriptive and prescriptive stages was thought desirable due to the "notion of governance and the political nature of the steering committee." The descriptive stage was to be conducted by Department of Education personnel and the prescriptive stage by an external contractor.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵D. King, 31 May 1979.

²⁷⁶D. King, 31 May 1979.

²⁷⁷Bonnyville Nouvelle, 22 May 1979, p. 9.

²⁷⁸Report of the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre Study Committee, 10 October 1979. In correspondence with the researcher, The Minister of Education indicated that the idea of using an external contractor had its origin in the Department of Education.

In addition, the study was categorized into three broad areas of facilities, programs and personnel: "what facilities, programs and personnel needs are in existence now and will be needed with the proposed development in the area?"²⁷⁹ As well as planning to meet the needs resulting from the area's development, it was suggested that the contractor also be concerned with "recommendations for resolving program delivery problem areas [e.g. bilingual education]."²⁸⁰

In a letter dated 16 October 1979, and based on their previously expressed agreement, the Minister invited the seven area Boards to each name a representative to a Ministerial Advisory Committee which, they were informed, was to be chaired by Dr. S. N. Odynak and would include the Director of Finance, Statistics and Legislation Dr. W. R. Duke, the Director of Field Services Dr. E. A. Torgunrud, and the Director of School Buildings Dr. J. W. Kulba. Also, the Director of the Cold Lake Coordinating Committee, A. Craig, had been invited to name a representative. Dr. S. J. Thiessen of Planning Services Branch was appointed Secretary to the Committee. The letter reiterated a two stage study and gave some details of the selection and funding procedures for the external contractor. The fact that the Ministerial Advisory Committee was to be chaired by an Associate Deputy Minister and would include three Departmental directors is suggestive of the importance placed on the work by the Minister.

Despite earlier understandings that parent groups would be represented on the Committee, the Minister chose to include only local board representatives.²⁸¹ The concern expressed by District #2665 was influential on this matter,²⁸² along with the political wisdom of dealing with the locally responsible elected bodies.

Though it had been suggested that Regional District #4 be represented through its parent boards, an invitation to appoint its own representative was extended. Dr. B. Brosseau was therefore officially representing District #4, though Committee colleagues indicated that he was primarily concerned with the interests of District #2665 which was represented by C. Vincent. Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64 and Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67 were represented by L. Bujold and F. Michaud respectively. Thus, the three Catholic boards in the area with thirty-five percent of the non-Medley student population had almost sixty percent of the local representation on the committee. This resulted in some feeling on the part of Divisional trustees

²⁷⁹Report Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre Study Committee.

²⁸⁰Report Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre Study Committee.

²⁸¹Bonnyville Nouvelle, 19 June 1979, p. 10.

²⁸²Correspondence M. Beaudoin to D. King, 28 June 1979.

that, considering their sixty-five percent of the non-Medley student population, their single member representation by A. Ryll was inadequate. The matter was not further addressed by the Department, because the Division did not choose to pursue the issue.²⁸³

Major L. J. Tien represented Medley S.D.#2665 and Northland S.D.#61 was represented by Mrs. A. Jacknife. The latter representative from the Elizabeth Metis Colony appears to have attended only the first meeting of the Committee.²⁸⁴

After some debate, the Committee agreed to allow the two Bonnyville superintendents, G. Kuschminder (Division #46) and B. Decoux²⁸⁵ (Districts #2665, #64 and #67) and Medley superintendent W. Novak (Medley S.D.#5029) to attend as observers.

General Organization of the Study

Prior to the first meeting of the Ministerial Advisory Committee,²⁸⁶ a decision had been taken within the Department of Education that the first phase of a study would be completed by Department of Education personnel. Although this was in keeping with what the Minister had envisaged in his letters, 31 May and 16 October, the Department had given consideration to alternate procedures. In a discussion paper based on the internal planning meeting of 10 October which was chaired by J. Jeffrey, Dr. S. J. Thiessen had proposed three alternatives.²⁸⁷ First, a contractor could complete both phases under the direct control of the local jurisdictions. This proposal had the serious political disadvantage that "the Minister would have virtually no control over the project."²⁸⁸ Second, a contractor could complete both phases under the control of Planning and Research Branch of the Department of Education. The possibility of the study being seen as Departmentally dominated was of concern in this proposal. The third alternative provided for Phase One to be conducted by Department of Education personnel and Phase Two by an external contractor responsible directly to the

²⁸³S. N. Odynak, Interview, 24 January 1979.

²⁸⁴Cold Lake Study Steering Committee, Minutes.

²⁸⁵B. Decoux was acting superintendent, June 1979 to July 1980 while M. Beaudoin was on leave.

²⁸⁶Initially, the Committee was referred to as a Ministerial Advisory Committee and its function described as being that of a steering committee (Minister's letter, 31 May 1979). However, from the time of its actual formation the term "Cold Lake Study Steering Committee" was used in documentation. In this chapter the shortened form "Steering Committee" has been used.

²⁸⁷"Study Proposal Alternatives for the Cold Lake/Grand Centre/Bonnyville School Systems" 11 October 1979.

²⁸⁸"Study Proposal Alternatives for the Cold Lake/Grand Centre/Bonnyville School Systems" 11 October 1979.

Minister but guided by a Steering Committee. This third alternative was adopted because it was the most cost effective in Phase One, utilized local representatives on the Steering Committee for Phase Two, would use existing Departmental procedures for funding research studies for the benefit of local jurisdictions, and would allow the Department of Education to exercise closer control than if the study were turned over to the local jurisdictions.

The Steering Committee met for the first time on 29 October 1979 in Bonnyville, which was also the location for its eight subsequent meetings.²⁸⁹ Copies of the **Swift Report** were circulated together with an information package containing details of each jurisdiction (date of establishment, townships in jurisdiction, sub-divisions and school centres, tuition agreements, equalized assessment and maximum allowable mill rates). Dr. W. Hathaway from Planning and Research Branch then reported on enrolment trends in the five jurisdictions since 1974. Thus, the descriptive first phase of the study had been completed by Department of Education personnel prior to the formation of the Steering Committee.

The attention of the Committee was then turned to Phase Two of the study and five major categories of concern were identified and placed in the following order of priority: 1. Facilities, 2. Programming, 3. Transportation, 4. Boundary and Jurisdiction Issues, and 5. Funding. Facilities development was of prime importance in order to accommodate the pupils expected because of the anticipated oil development. Of second importance was the need to provide appropriate programs for both present and future students. Transportation and governance issues had long been problems in the area. Funding was placed fifth "because the representatives of the local boards did not believe a solution need be worked out immediately."²⁹⁰

Also at this first meeting the Committee defined its own role and that of the contractor. The contractor was to analyse Phase One data, present a study proposal for Phase Two, conduct the study and provide regular reports to the Steering Committee. For its part, the Steering Committee's role was noted as coordinating all aspects of the study, overseeing the study to ensure target dates and specifications were adhered to, and evaluating

²⁸⁹The Committee met 29 October, 18 January, 18 February, 2 May, 2 June, 26 June, 30 July, 3 September.

²⁹⁰Bonnyville Nouvelle, 30 October 1979, p. 1; Memorandum S. J. Thiessen to M. R. Fenske, 17 December 1979. In this memorandum, Dr. Thiessen set out the basic format to be followed in the study as agreed at the initial Steering Committee meeting, 29 October.

recommendations made by the contractor.²⁹¹

The Department of Education had been authorized at the October meeting to recommend a contractor. On 7 December, after having received "written indication" from each of the local representatives, Dr. Odynak, the Committee chairman, issued an invitation to the Sage Institute of Canada to conduct the study.²⁹² A report to this effect had already been published in the *Bonnyville Nouvelle* on 4 December. The Director of the Sage Institute, Dr. Bryant Stringham, had been Director of Field Services in the Department of Education until April 1979.

Selection of Sage Institute

As noted earlier in this chapter, Dr. Stringham, prior to his leaving the post of Director of Field Services, had recommended a detailed study as a possible approach toward resolving the educational problems of the Bonnyville area.²⁹³ He was aware of the Minister's later acceptance of this approach and took the initiative in acquainting his former colleagues Drs. Odynak and Torgunrud of the planning capabilities of the Sage Analysis process:

. . . after I left the Department in April of 1979, I acquainted . . . my former associates with the kinds of things we were doing and as that situation [Bonnyville] became heated up, Steve Odynak . . . had a feeling that what we were doing might have some . . . applicability to bringing these groups together because they were so different in points of view. I also talked to Gene Torgunrud, who succeeded me as Director of Field Services and in talking with those two they said they thought it might be a technique that would bring people together. . . . So they said they would go ahead with a trial . . . on this thing and see what happens.²⁹⁴

A similar account was given by the Committee secretary, Dr. J. Thiessen. He commented that because the Phase One data had been already assembled within the Department, "Stringham's activity happened to fit." The Department wanted a contractor . . .

to use that information logically within the situation in Bonnyville and surrounding area . . . and it happened that Stringham had just left the Department, we knew him, and based on the kind of things other contractors were proposing, we thought this one does have some merit. We'll take it and try it.²⁹⁵

Dr. Stringham's Sage Analysis proposal was also contrasted with the known work of other possible contractors. Non-Departmental personnel were asked "to review his particular process and give information about what they saw as the Sage Analysis' strengths and weaknesses."²⁹⁶

²⁹¹Cold Lake Study Steering Committee, Minutes, 29 October 1979.

²⁹²Memorandum, S. N. Odynak to M. R. Fenske, 7 December 1979.

²⁹³Memorandum, B. L. Stringham to D. King, 18 April 1979.

²⁹⁴B. L. Stringham, Interview, 18 January 1984.

²⁹⁵J. Thiessen, Interview, 31 January 1984.

²⁹⁶J. Thiessen, Interview.

The Director of Planning and Research Branch submitted a list of "five persons considered capable of conducting the study" to the chairman of the Steering Committee.²⁹⁷ It seems that the selection of Dr. Stringham and the Sage Institute was done by the Department members of the Steering Committee.

Dr. Odynak recommended to the Deputy Minister that the names be discussed with the Minister. This was done on 13 November.²⁹⁸

Thus, it would seem that, following Dr. Stringham's initial approach, Drs. Odynak and Torgunrud saw the possible merits of a Sage Analysis Study for the Bonnyville situation and, with the agreement of other Departmental representatives on the Steering Committee, took their recommendation to the Minister. Subsequently, the agreement of the local representatives on the Steering Committee was obtained.

Not only did the Sage Analysis offer a study program that was claimed to have the potential to bring local participants together through involving them at every stage of the study, but in Dr. Stringham, the Steering Committee was obtaining the expertise of someone who not only knew the Bonnyville area and its problems well but also had for many years worked alongside the senior Departmental administrators on the Steering Committee.

Local Perceptions of the Selection

Local trustees and administrators were a little cynical in their perceptions as to why Dr. Stringham was chosen to conduct the study. Officials from both the former Bonnyville jurisdictions believed that the coterminous jurisdictions solution was the preferred solution in the minds of the Minister and senior Departmental administrators even prior to the establishment of the Steering Committee. According to this argument either Dr. Stringham knew what sort of recommendation was wanted or Departmental personnel understood him sufficiently well to believe that he would proffer their preferred solution.

A former Division #46 superintendent commented:

Most definitely. . . No two ways about that. I think it [coterminous jurisdiction solution] even predates the Odynak committee. No two ways. I knew when Bryant Stringham phoned me and said . . . "I would like to chat with you." I knew exactly what his proposal was going to be in the Sage Report and I think probably that's why the Sage Institute was chosen to prepare that particular report. After all, Bryant Stringham had worked with the School Act and the revision of the School Act for

²⁹⁷Memorandum, M. R. Fenske to S. N. Odynak, 8 November 1979.

²⁹⁸Handwritten note to the Deputy Minister at the foot of Dr. Fenske's memorandum.

years. We felt that that was a cut and dried situation.²⁹⁹

An assistant superintendent of the Division indicated very similar perceptions to the researcher.³⁰⁰

A trustee of District #2665 did not perceive Dr. Stringham as "an important cog" but as being used to serve predetermined Departmental ends. He commented

I think government officials [and] the Minister did this . . . as a cover up more than anything else. I think their minds were made up and Sage was used to implement something that had been decided. In retrospect that's what I think.³⁰¹

A Division #46 trustee claimed that "after about the first two Committee meetings it was pretty obvious to us how the Department wanted us to go."³⁰² In response to the suggestion that the whole strategy of reorganization was predetermined he stated:

There was no doubt and everybody was aware of that. Dr. Stringham was a former member of the Department, had written the School Act, and knew the ins and outs. That was one of the reasons why he was hired. That was the assumption made by most people . . . I think that everybody agreed that Sage was hired just to make it look as though the people had made this great decision.³⁰³

After reorganization another former superintendent wrote to the Department of Education, "These changes were to a significant degree orchestrated by the department, and hence the province."³⁰⁴

Understandably, the Department of Education administrators involved did not share such perceptions at all. In commenting to the researcher on the assertion that reorganization was orchestrated W. T. Worbets gave a somewhat different perspective of Departmental intentions:

If it is perceived by some people that provision of an opportunity for all school elected officials to meet on numerous occasions to express their views, expectations, and concerns and explore ways how all these diversities can be accommodated is orchestration then the participant is correct.³⁰⁵

More detailed discussion of the views of departmental administrators is dealt with later in this chapter in the context of an evaluation of the Sage contribution to the reorganization process.

Dr. Stringham also rejected the accuracy of local perceptions. He commented:

I can understand local people believing this but there was no direction given by the

²⁹⁹S. Skuba, Interview.

³⁰⁰W. Hayduk, Interview, 9 November 1983.

³⁰¹C. Vincent, Interview.

³⁰²A. Ryll, Interview.

³⁰³A. Ryll, Interview.

³⁰⁴Correspondence, G. Kuschminder to E. A. Torgunrud, 8 December 1980.

³⁰⁵Correspondence, W. T. Worbets to R. L. Iles, 2 March 1984.

Department in any way about what the recommended solutions should be.³⁰⁶

The Steering Committee and the Sage Institute

After formal acceptance of the Sage Institute as the contractor at its January meeting, the Steering Committee's primary task was to oversee the Institute's needs assessment study for education in Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area. Therefore, the subsequent work of the Committee needs to be examined in the context of the Sage Institute's study.

In this third section, an overview is presented of the five stages of Sage Analysis. Then follows a detailed description of the application of the Sage methodology in the Bonnyville study, culminating with an outline of the major recommendations contained in the final Sage Institute's Report. The section is concluded with the presentation of some evaluative comments pertaining to the worth of the Sage Study.

C. The Sage Institute Study

Dr. Stringham attended the meeting of the Steering Committee on 18 January 1980 and initiated the study which was to be based on a procedure termed "Sage analysis." The following section outlines the major processes involved in Sage analysis. In the Bonnyville study conducted by the Sage Institute of Canada, the Ministerial Advisory Committee acted as the Steering Committee.

Sage Analysis: An Overview

Sage analysis is a derivative of fault tree analysis. Its originator, Dr. K. G. Stephens, developed a procedure whereby the subjective judgements of individuals about critical concerns could be quantified, thus enabling the identification and management of priority issues to be computer-assisted.³⁰⁷

The major objectives of a Sage analysis have been listed as:

1. to help identify alternative future ideal conditions,
2. to identify and remove barriers to success,
3. to retain those things that the [steering] committee wants to retain.³⁰⁸

Thus, the purpose of these objectives is "to create a greater overlap between the real and the

³⁰⁶Correspondence, B. L. Stringham to R. L. Iles, May 1984.

³⁰⁷Kent G. Stephens, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1972.

³⁰⁸Sage Institute, *Sage Analysis* pp. 2-3.

ideal" as shown diagrammatically in Figure 1. This Sage process is outlined below in five rather than seven stages.

Stage 1. Initially a mission statement, which depicts the desired ideal, is developed in association with the client steering committee. In addition, factors critical to the success of the mission are listed by the committee. Subsequently, a comprehensive series of personal interviews and public meetings as approved by the steering committee are undertaken by Sage Institute personnel. These are used to gain "further input into the list of critical success factors, perceived failures and suggested solutions to problems until a complete picture is assembled."³⁰⁹

These qualitative data are then organized into an all-inclusive fault tree to show "a breakdown of failure causes in cause/effect chains," of those factors that prevent the full realization of the ideal.³¹⁰ Both "current and future situations that have the potential to inhibit full accomplishment of the mission" are included.³¹¹

Stage 2. At this stage, a questionnaire document, containing all items shown on the fault tree, is rated by as many relevant persons as desired by the steering committee. In the rating process respondents are asked to rate all items for their (a) severity, (b) frequency of occurrence, (c) ease of remediation and (d) personal level of confidence in achieving a solution.³¹²

By the end of Stage 2 therefore, the collective experience and expertise of the people who are presumed to know most about an organization have been accessed through both interview and questionnaire.

Stage 3. From these questionnaire derived data, Strategic Event Values are calculated by computer and plotted to graphically show prime, secondary and tertiary failure paths on the fault tree. Computer plotted paths are also obtained for particular groupings of respondents.

Stage 4. All computer plots are then examined by the steering committee and consensus is sought regarding the problems requiring solution. The steering committee then endeavours to formulate the most suitable strategies for coping with the high-priority concerns as revealed in the computerised fault tree plots.

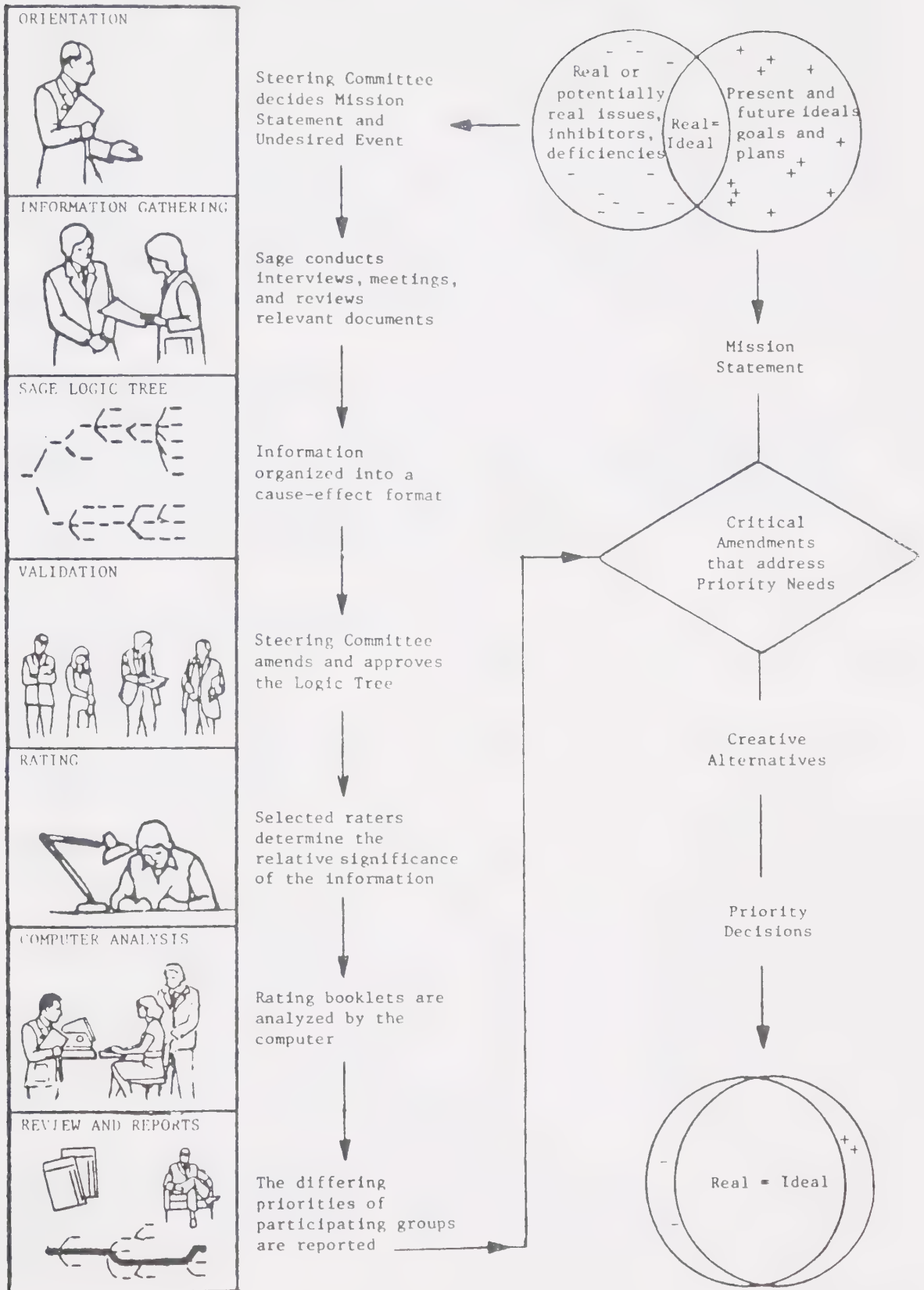
³⁰⁹Sage Institute of Canada, *A Proposal to Examine Educational Needs in Cold Lake/Bonnyville Area*, p. 10.

³¹⁰Sage Institute, *Proposal*, p. 10.

³¹¹Sage Institute, *Sage Analysis*, p. 3.

³¹²Sage Institute, *Proposal*, p. 11.

Figure 1
THE SEVEN PHASES OF SAGE ANALYSIS



At this stage, suggested strategies are "examined for congruence with the critical success factors" that were initially developed by the steering committee and later added to and refined as a result of the interview process. Thus, the interview data from the affected publics is utilized in both the calculation of Strategic Event Values and also listing of Critical Success Factors.

Stage 5. The report issued to the steering committee reflects the "consensus of opinion about concerns held by the affected people in order of priority" and recommendations will be based on the consensus generated by the steering committee in Stage IV. Thus, it is claimed that "decision makers are placed in a powerful position to reconcile priority needs with creative solutions."³¹³

Summary. The Sage Institute has described Sage Analysis in these terms:

Sage Analysis is a computer-assisted procedure for identification and management of priority issues. It is a dynamic process that measures the consensus of people about plans to be made, problems to be solved, and issues to be addressed. It systematically and graphically categorizes, analyses, and reports the concerns of the people who know the most about a particular system, enabling the organization of which they are a part, to more fully utilize their collective experience and expertise.³¹⁴

Stage 1: Study Mission and Data Collection

The mission statement for the study,³¹⁵ developed by the Steering Committee at its 18 January meeting, was stated as:

To provide, maintain and extend quality education for all children, respecting their cultural and religious orientations, who are resident in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area.

Subsequently, the phrase "now, during and after the expected period of population influx", was added to the statement as clarification of the relevant time frames involved.

Commencing with the five major categories of concern agreed upon and delimited at the initial meeting of the Steering Committee,³¹⁶ a detailed listing of Critical Success Factors was developed and agreed to by the Committee at its meeting on 18 February 1980. Those factors judged to be critical to the success of the mission were listed under the headings of Buildings, Programming, Transportation, Governance, Funding, Energy and Other. Energy

³¹³Sage Institute, *Sage Analysis*, p. 3.

³¹⁴Sage Institute, *Sage Analysis*, p. 1.

³¹⁵In keeping with the term used at the time, "study" will be used to refer to the Sage program. However, the Institute now uses the term "project" to describe its work.

³¹⁶29 October 1979.

was added because the Bonnyville jurisdictions were among a small number of school jurisdictions nominated to try a provincial program to conserve energy in schools. The Other category was used to include factors pertaining to social and cultural values. A complete listing of all Critical Success Factors drawn up is presented in Appendix C.

The Steering Committee then decided that the Undesired Event, the failure of the mission, would be judged to have occurred if any of the following conditions were to exist

- 10,000 children in existing buildings
- 10,000 spaces and no students
- no cooperation between boards
- public protest
- cost overrun on the local Boards
- overburden of debt
- inadequate programming
- shortage of qualified teachers
- dissatisfaction of teachers
- inability to meet needs of existing and new resident groups
- no fiscal equalization
- intergovernmental conflict
- no cooperation with industry
- boards and/or government reject recommendations for accommodating needs.³¹⁷

At the January meeting of the Steering Committee, it had been agreed that members of the Steering Committee, trustees of each of the Boards (except Northland S.D.#61), senior administrators of each Board, principals of area schools and other relevant Department of Education officials would be interviewed by Sage Institute staff. Individuals and other interested groups such as Home and School Associations, Alberta Teachers' Association local, school staffs, Lakeland Association for the Retarded, Native people associations would be invited to submit briefs and participate in two public hearings. One hearing was planned for Bonnyville, 13 March 1980, and a second in Grand Centre on the following day.

A total of between 250 and 300 persons, including high school students, were interviewed in late February and March. In fact, the range of persons interviewed was much

³¹⁷Sage Report pp. 38-9.

wider than the listing previously drawn up by the Steering Committee. Sage interviewers made themselves readily available in both Bonnyville and Grand Centre so that any member of the public who wished could call on them. Interviews were also conducted at Elizabeth Metis Colony. Dr. Stringham commented on the high public profile Sage people had in the area:

. . . we were quite visible in the area for about a two month period . . . And virtually anybody who wanted to talk to us could. The papers told exactly what we had done and reported our meetings- sensationalized them to some extent. . . got hold of the Briefs and editorialized on them. So people knew the kinds of things we were doing.³¹⁸

Briefs were presented at public meetings in Bonnyville and Grand Centre on 13 and 14 March 1980 by L'ACFA Regionale de Bonnyville, A-Quest, St. Louis Parish Council of Bonnyville and five individuals. Notices published in local newspapers had invited responses to the following six questions:

1. Where should my children be going to school?
2. What should my children be learning at school?
3. Who should I be talking to about educational decisions that affect me and my children?
4. What is the best way of providing transport of my children to school?
5. Who should pay how much for the education of my children?
6. What changes will be needed as the population increases over the next few years?

Briefs submitted by individuals responded to these questions directly but the three organizations adopted their own preferred structure.³¹⁹

The public hearings were not well attended.³²⁰ Dr. Stringham explained the relatively low attendances in these terms:

Well, in many instances, people who were interested had already come to see us in private. We had sat at council offices and the library on one occasion and anybody who wanted to could come and see us. In other instances, they belong to an association that had already put together a brief.³²¹

Perhaps what is surprising is that Briefs were presented on behalf of only three organizations. Other formal and informal groups might reasonably have been expected to present a collectively considered Brief.

Subsequent to the interview processes, Sage staff fashioned the data that had been collected into a five part cause-effect fault tree graphically portrayed as a computer printed

³¹⁸B. L. Stringham, Interview.

³¹⁹Bonnyville Nouvelle, 27 February 1980.

³²⁰At Bonnyville five and fourteen attended the afternoon and evening sessions respectively on 13 March. Attendance was slightly greater the next day in Grand Centre with twenty-five attending the evening session.

³²¹B. L. Stringham, Interview.

chart one metre in height and almost six metres in length. Data, showing possible causes of mission failure, were organized into the five major areas of concern that the Steering Committee had identified at its initial meeting. Perceived critical factors in each of the categories as shown on the fault tree were: facilities, sixty-seven; programming, one hundred and sixteen; transportation, seventy-eight; governance, fifty-one; and funding thirty.

Stage 2: The Rating Process

At its 2 May meeting, the Steering Committee approved, with minor wording amendments, a draft fifty-five page questionnaire type rating document based on the 342 critical events included on the fault tree. The rating of these items was completed on 25 May 1980 at a three hour meeting of 125 raters at the Fort Kent school.

The Steering Committee had invited 250 persons to the rating session including, (a) elected representatives of local councils, school boards, Indian bands, Metis settlements, church groups, (b) representatives of educational groups--administrators, principals, teachers, students and (c) representatives of eleven special interest groups. It was agreed that the results of the rating would be calculated for (a) the total group of raters, (b) trustees, (c) educators, (d) other publics and (e) students.

Stage 3: The Analysis

A total of 121 usable questionnaires were completed by nineteen students, thirty-one parents, thirty-three Steering Committee and Board members, and thirty-eight educators and others. Bayesian estimates of probability, termed Strategic Event Values, were calculated for all items that appeared in the fault tree. Only twenty-one of the 342 perceived mission failure items were significant at the .05 level.

Overall, the respondents rated the five categories in the following order of importance: 1. facilities, 2. funding, 3. governance, 4. programming, 5. transportation. With the exception of facilities, the raters thus perceived the categories to have a different order of priority, in terms of causing mission failure, from that established by the Steering Committee at its first meeting. While the first four categories were all highly significant, transport did not show as significant at all.³²² It was indicated that "there is not much difference in the degree to which

³²²This was a little surprising given the long history of conflict over bussing in the Bonnyville, Fort Kent, LaCorey and Iron River areas. One possible explanation

the groups distinguish between the importance of the four areas.³²³

Summary fault trees for the composite rating as well as for ratings of students, parents, Steering Committee and Board members and educators were produced.

Raters gave high priority to the need for (a) accurate population and planning projections, (b) additional revenues being made available to alleviate excessive local tax burdens, (c) the granting of adequate authority to local decision makers to deal with rapid changes, (d) the greater availability of French language courses, and (e) the important role parents and "integrative, supportive communities" play in overcoming student apathy and poor learning attitudes.

Areas (a), (b) and (c) above were of concern to educators who were also the only group to "show a strong concern about safeguarding the separate school system."³²⁴ School Boards and Steering Committee members were greatly concerned with (a) and (c) areas and also expressed a desire for more satisfactory relations between school boards and parents. Parents indicated a need to deal with areas (b) and (c), and they alone stressed the need for continuation and improvement of French language courses. Finally, students were uniquely concerned about the improvement of existing facilities, the problem of poor attitudes to learning among many students and the provision of vocation/industrial education including appropriate post-secondary programs.

When reported at the Steering Committee meeting on 2 June, opinion was divided as to acceptability of the rating results. Questions were raised as to their accuracy since the rating process had "only sampled" the opinions of local residents. However, the Committee was not disposed to query the veracity of the study's methodology.

Consensus was that this Committee should proceed on the basis of accepting these results; however, minority group opinions must also be kept in mind.³²⁵

³²²(cont'd) reported to the researcher, by a number of interviewees, was that raters at Fort Kent were apparently told to leave transport questions until last and in many cases due to time shortage these were not completed.

³²³Sage Report, p. 41.

³²⁴Sage Report, p. 42.

³²⁵Steering Committee, Minutes, 2 June 1980.

Stage 4: Development of Solution Strategies

The findings were placed before the Steering Committee at its 2 June meeting. The twenty-one perceived mission failure items that were statistically significant at the .05 level were deemed by the Committee to be "root cause of problem" events. It was decided that only those should be addressed in proposed solution strategies.

When the Steering Committee gave consideration to the four highly rated categories, it determined that the issue of governance had to be addressed first because it would affect decisions regarding facilities and funding. This was a key decision of the Committee, for it shaped the remainder of their work and therefore the final **Sage Report**. Dr. Stringham explained:

. . . in looking at what . . . those priorities really meant they said, "Look . . . until we decide the governance issue we can't really look at these other issues at all. That's got to be primary."
And that may also have been from the standpoint of people who were involved in management rather than just reacting to what had gone on in schools. And so they said, "Let's deal with that first." That's all they did deal with really . . . And I think they were right on because the rest of it was sequential kinds of things that needed to be dealt with after the governance was resolved.

Dr. Stringham presented the idea of coterminous public and Roman Catholic separate boards as a possible solution to the governance issue. He also outlined a strategy by which this could be done within the provisions of the **School Act**. Other alternatives discussed were to maintain the status quo, for the provincial government to allocate extraordinarily oil-plant assessment revenue to the existing Boards, create multiplicity of separate boards throughout Division #46 and use tuition agreements to funnel taxes to the three operational Catholic boards, create independent coterminous districts in both the eastern and western portions of the area each with a public and a separate school system, or create one public and two Roman Catholic separate districts.

At the 26 June meeting of the Steering Committee, discussion occurred concerning the effect that delays in decision-making at the federal-provincial level in regard to an energy agreement would have on shortening school building construction. Solution of the governance issues was confirmed as the logical starting point for success of the mission statement.

At the same meeting, the Sage Institute presented the four scenarios that were later to be included in the Report document.³²⁶

³²⁶These four scenarios have been discussed in the sub-section headed "Stage 5A: The Report".

The minutes of the meeting also indicate four procedural decisions taken by the Committee. First, that the four scenarios outlined by Sage were to be taken back to each of the Boards for responses which would then be discussed at the subsequent Committee meeting. Second, that whatever scenario was finally agreed upon, its implementation would be timed to coincide with provincial approval to proceed with the Esso project. Third, that the Steering Committee would review the Sage Institute's recommendations and full report at its next meeting. Fourth, Department of Education officials made it clear that responsibility for the final Report belonged to the Sage Institute, who were to forward it directly to the Minister. These administrators did not wish to be seen as publicly espousing a particular course of action which may or may not be accepted by the Minister.³²⁷

Stage 5A: The Report

In the first half of the final **Report** the descriptive Phase One data were collated and published. The second half of the Report contained Phase Two of the study and included discussion of the procedures used, an outline of fifty recommendations that pertained to the five failure event categories determined earlier and the reasons for the major governance recommendations.

Four scenarios, two of which had an internal alternative, were advanced in the final Report. The rationale for each alternative, as given in the **Sage Report**, is summarised below.

I. Status Quo. One scenario involved leaving the seven school boards as they were and continuing to manage the conflict on an ad hoc basis as had been done in the past. If this course had been followed the smaller separate boards in Cold Lake and Grand Centre may have retained a greater sense of ownership among parents, ratepayers, teachers and pupils.

However, to do nothing denied the reality of growing pressure for change even without the expected economic development. According to the Report, preservation of the status quo failed to address the extant major problems in the area: the protection of French and Catholic education in Bonnyville should the changing population of the area result in a change of control on the public school board; and the difficulty of multiple boards with diverse philosophical perspectives having, for reasons of efficiency and equity, to negotiate on a wide variety of educational matters.

³²⁷W. R. Duke, Interview, 24 January 1984.

II.Decentralization. In the second scenario, it is suggested that additional separate school districts be created within the area of Bonnyville S.Div. #46 to provide for the needs of Catholic and francophone residents. This would have addressed concerns of minority Catholic groups although it would not have been legally possible in areas where Catholics were the majority. In addition, such a course of action would even further fragment the administration of education.

An alternative form of decentralization discussed was the formation of a Catholic separate school board in Bonnyville based on the attendance area of the former Regional School District #4 with the present Bonnyville S.D. #2665 being the public board in fact and not in name only. However, such a plan still relied on negotiation and consensus among different boards and also failed to account for the needs of Catholic and francophone residents outside the Regional District #4 boundaries.

III.Cooperation. This plan anticipated the creation of two large coterminous districts, a public and a Roman Catholic separate, to serve the needs of the entire Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area. Such a plan was perceived to have a number of advantages: planning both within and between boards would be facilitated by the existence of only two boards in the area; both boards would have equal access to assessment based on their number of resident students; separate school supporters would achieve a model for their long sought goal of separate divisional-type jurisdictions in rural as well as urban areas; minority francophone linguistic and Catholic religious rights would be protected; and each board would possess a sufficiently large student base to offer a diverse curriculum within the district.

Disadvantages of such a proposal were identified as a feeling of a loss of local autonomy in some areas. It might be argued that local cultural, linguistic, religious and social structures may be undermined by a major reorganization, and that the establishment of electoral sub-divisions within the two proposed districts may be a divisive issue.

The formation of independent public and separate boards in both east (Cold Lake - Grand Centre) and west (Bonnyville - Glendon - Fort Kent) was suggested as an alternative third scenario. The major problem was that the two eastern boards could have considerable financial resources due to the location of the Esso oil-sands plant in their area, while the two western boards would be more poorly endowed. Also, because of smaller pupil numbers, the boards would lack resources needed to offer a broader curriculum and their planning capacities

would be less comprehensive.

IV. An Eclectic Solution. It was suggested that a number of variations could be developed based on combinations of portions of the earlier scenarios. However, such variations would appear to have been open to being dictated by overt political considerations, would lack comprehensive planning, and would fail to address many of the important issues.

It would appear that following their analysis of the data, Sage Institute personnel took the findings and used their "intuition, judgement [and] tacit knowledge" to develop alternate strategy solutions to the basic problem of governance (Dunn, 1981:145). This was done in conjunction with local members of the Steering Committee who had detailed knowledge and expertise concerning the local education scene.

The arguments used in support of the claim that change in the structure of educational governance is necessary in the Bonnyville area could be classified as being based on subjective judgement derived from retroductive logic. This has been defined as "the process of reasoning that begins with claims about the future and then works backward to the information and/or assumptions to support claims." (Dunn, 1981:149). The subjective nature of these judgements is evidenced in the **Report** by continuing use of terms such as, "seems", "might", "could probably be", "it would be expected that", "seems likely", "in all probability",³²⁸ The logic of this subjective judgement, based on retroductive reasoning, as applied in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre study has been shown diagrammatically in Figure 2. Although Dunn (1981:149) advanced this conceptual framework for use in policy analysis, it appears to be also useful in the analysis of a particular management decision.

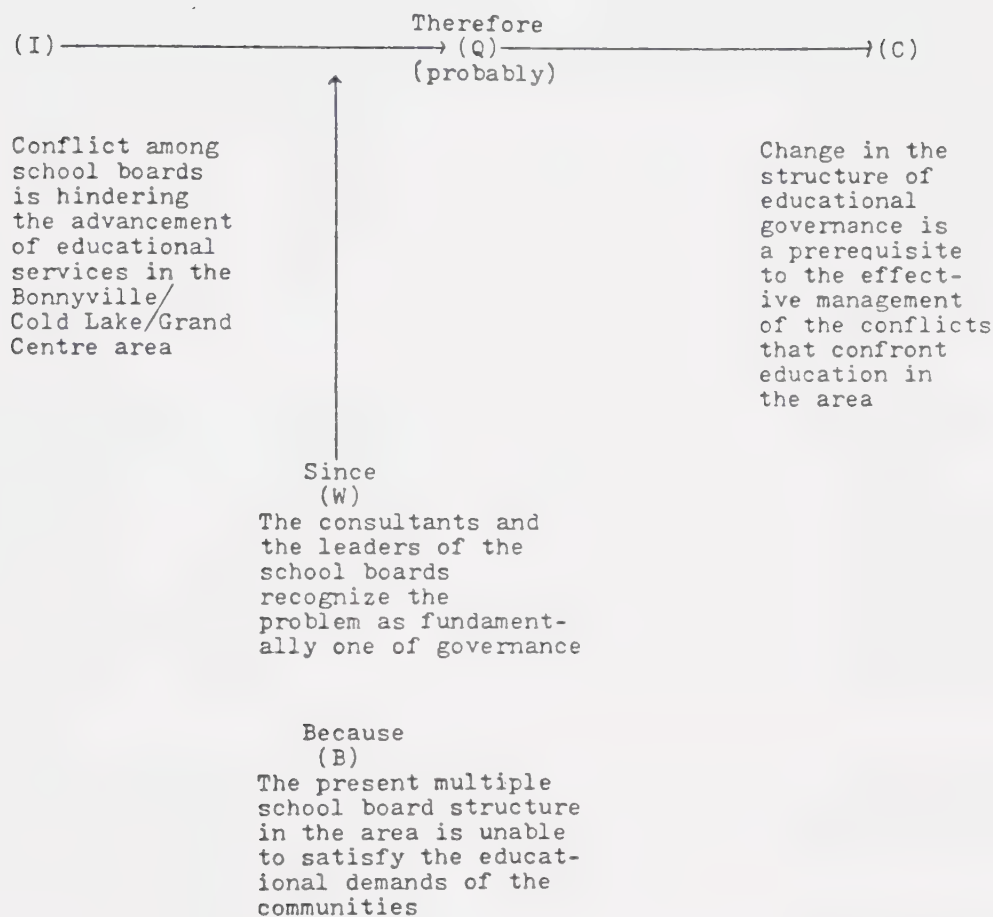
Stage 5B: The Recommendations

As already noted, the recommendations outlined in the Report were those of the Sage Institute. However, the major recommendation, that scenario IIIA, involving the formation of coterminous public and Roman Catholic separate systems, be implemented, also had the support of each of the former Boards. At the 30 July meeting, the Steering Committee chairman asked each of the local representatives whether his Board would accept scenario IIIA. A verbal undertaking was obtained from each representative.³²⁹ Thus, although from reading the **Report** it would appear that neither Department of Education administrators nor local

³²⁸Sage Report, pp. 44-53.

³²⁹S. N. Odynak, Interview, 24 January 1984.

Figure 2
The Logic of Subjective Judgment



I = management-relevant information
 W = warrant
 B = backing
 Q = qualifiers
 C = management claim

Adapted from William N. Dunn, Public Policy Analysis (Prentice-Hall 1981.)

representatives had endorsed it, in fact, the local boards had given an undertaking, reported separately to the Minister, that they accepted this major recommendation.³³⁰

Principles. Based upon their contact with Steering Committee members, local administrators, and members of the public, the Sage study team formulated a list of principles with which to gauge the adequacy of each of the scenarios. In these principles the importance of the interests of children and their parents, equality and adequacy of programs for all children, accommodation of moral, linguistic and cultural aspirations, the need to effect changes in governance within the present legal framework, equal access to funding for all boards, the balancing of sub-group interests against those of the total population, the balancing of educational adequacy and economic efficiency against local popular interest and control, and the need for flexibility at a time of economic and demographic change were asserted. In addition, it was stated appropriate solutions "must make possible the resolution of the failure sequences identified in the Sage analysis."³³¹ A full listing of these principles has been given in Appendix D.

Introduction to Recommendations. A total of fifty recommendations were presented in the **Report**. Twenty-four related to governance, six to facilities, five to funding, fourteen to programming and one to transportation. Because this dissertation is primarily focused upon the reorganization of school districts only the first sixteen governance recommendations have been outlined. These delineated procedures by which the provincial government could reorganize the region's school jurisdictions.³³² Some reference is made to other recommendations in Chapter Six.

Recommendations R1 and R2. Scenarios I, II, IIIB and IV were rejected on the grounds that they did not meet the principles previously outlined. On the other hand, scenario IIIA was recommended³³³ because it . . .

addresses each of the principles more completely than does any of the other alternatives. When decisions are made by only two boards for the entire area, the probability that broad interests are addressed is increased. The larger district boards, because of their responsibility to manage education for all children throughout the entire area, are less likely to be swayed by minor local non-educational interests than are smaller boards. The opportunity to approach both government and industry from a

³³⁰Correspondence, S. N. Odynak to R. L. Iles, May 1984.

³³¹**Sage Report**, p. 54.

³³²Of the eight governance recommendations, four referred to measures by which the new districts could promote increased public acceptability and four were concerned with facilitation, communication and cooperation between the new districts and the Department of Education.

³³³**Sage Report**, p. 55-6, R1 and R2.

broad base of community support will make the larger boards more effective in bargaining for benefits than smaller boards traditionally have been. Integrated future planning will be facilitated by locating decision-making authority in fewer boards.

Scenario IIIA will promote equal educational opportunity throughout the region. Equal access to funds will be a reality. This is crucial so that there can be equality in providing buildings and programs.³³⁴

Because the **School Act 1970** provides no mechanism for geographical expansion of separate school districts, coterminous districts for the whole region could only be created in a "once only" reorganization. Furthermore, in order to be prepared for the expected population explosion it was "advocated that the two new districts be created as soon as possible."³³⁵ A growth in Bonnyville's population also posed a threat to the distinct religious and cultural flavour of District #2665. The creation of a separate system would serve to protect these. Finally, within larger coterminous districts the identity of individual school communities could be adequately protected.

It was noted in the **Report** that failure to adopt scenario IIIA would result in consequences which represented a negation of the basic principles previously established (see Appendix D). With smaller boards, programming and staffing would be less adequate, facilities planning would likely be fragmented and more costly, concerns pertaining to local identity might take precedent over the educational needs of children, equality of opportunity would not occur because equality in funding could not be achieved, inequalities would heighten inter-community rivalries, and smaller boards would be less able to defend the interests of the pioneer population against the interests of newcomers.

Recommendations R3 - R16. These fourteen recommendations indicated the procedures that the Sage Institute advised as necessary to implement scenario IIIA. They may be summarized in the following manner. Following detailed public appraisal of the Report and its alternatives, Bonnyville S.Div. #46 would conduct a plebiscite to dissolve Duclos P.S.S.D. #2. Once the Alberta Government gave formal approval for the Esso project to proceed, the Minister would dissolve Duclos P.S.S.D. #2, thereby reverting all former Duclos supporters into electors of public District #2665. Roman Catholic ratepayers of District #2665 would then petition the Minister to form a Roman Catholic separate school district.

Subsequently, on a given date, the Minister would enlarge the boundaries of District #2665 to include all Division #46, Metis settlement #9, and additional territory "to include

³³⁴Sage Report, pp. 56-7.

³³⁵Sage Report, p. 57.

present and anticipated sites of heavy and conventional oil developments."³³⁶ Details are shown on Map #3. Simultaneously, he would dissolve Bonnyville R.S.D.#4 and Division #46, rename the expanded District #2665 as Beaver River School District, include into it Medley S.D.#5029 and establish Beaver River Roman Catholic Separate School District. This district would be coterminous with Beaver River S.D. and include Bevan R.C.S.S.D.#124, Willow Trail R.C.S.S.D.#125, Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64 and Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67. Provision was made for each of the new districts to be divided by a north-south line near Ardmore into east and west wards, with each ward electing four trustees, thus providing each of the new districts with a board of eight trustees. Two alternative sets of election procedures were outlined with different time frames. The Sage Institute recommended an immediate implementation so that the triennial school board elections, due to be held 15 October 1980, could proceed. In this regard it was noted:

The degree of acceptance that has been shown in steering committee meetings, by representatives of the public and in the press, indicates that this may be attainable.³³⁷

Dr. Stringham, who in 1970 had been Chairman of the Department of Education committee that had drafted the revision of the **School Act**, considered that the procedures recommended by the Sage Institute to effect the reorganization were the minimum necessary to comply with the relevant constitutional, federal and provincial law. He commented, "What I outlined were the stages that needed to be followed in order to meet the 1901 [**North West Territories**] **Ordinance** which was still prevalent in that year."³³⁸

Sage Study: Some Evaluative Perspectives

Interviewees provided a wide variety of perspectives as to the value of the Sage study. Opinions ranged from completely negative to quite positive.

Several trustee representatives on the Steering Committee were quite negative on this matter. After suggesting that Sage was used to deflect possible later criticism, one commented that

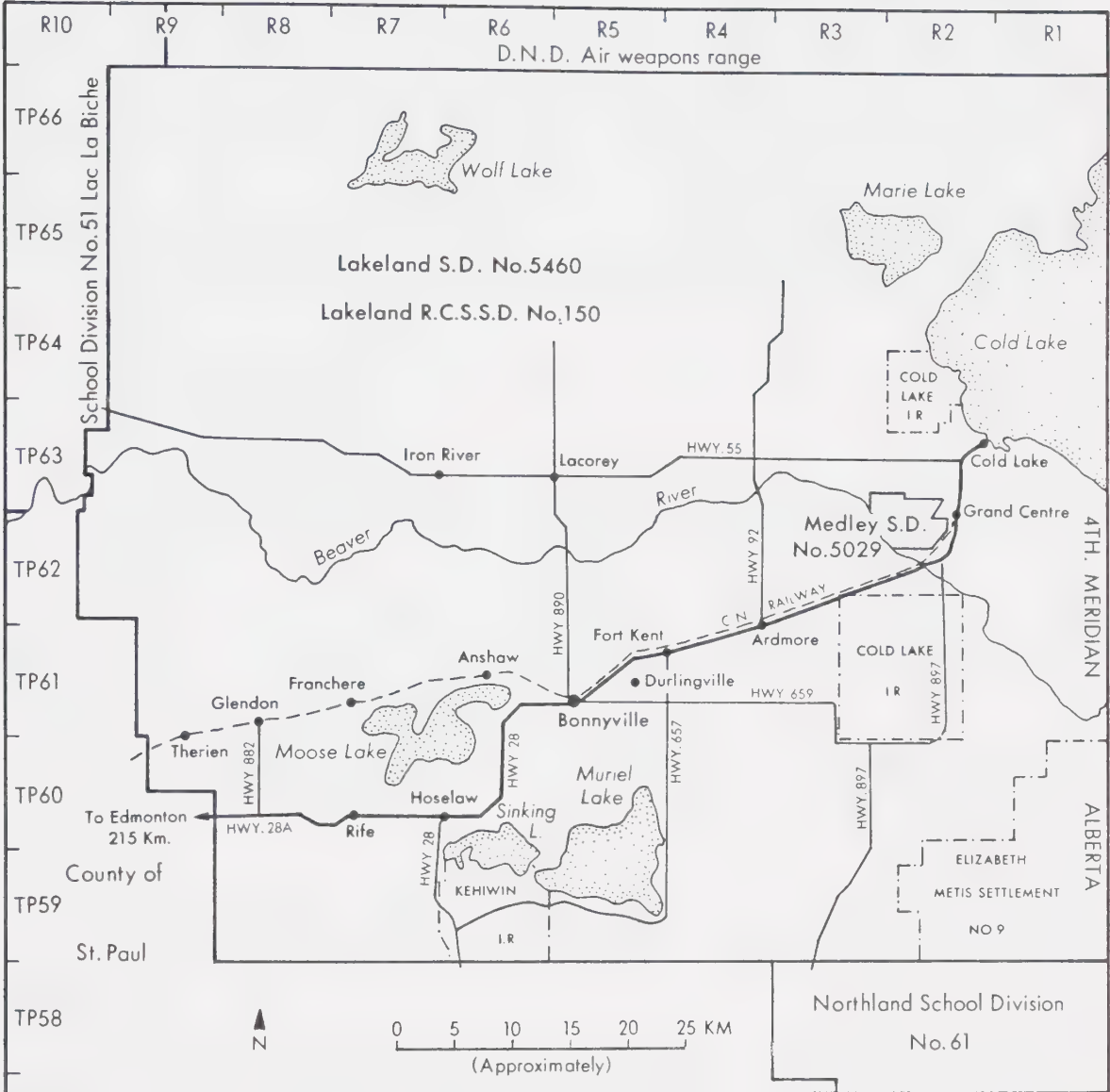
. . . really I think we could have had half the number of meetings without Sage had people from the Department come here [and] meet with representatives from the various boards. [We] could have accomplished the same thing in a lot less time and [it] may have been much better done. I'm convinced of that.³³⁹

³³⁶Sage Report, p. 60.

³³⁷Sage Report, p. 61.

³³⁸B. L. Stringham, Interview.

³³⁹A. Ryll, Interview.



MAP 3

LAKELAND SCHOOL DISTRICTS' BOUNDARIES

Another trustee member of the Steering Committee was just as critical:

I think we could have sat down with a few Department officials to tell us the ramifications of the thing and we didn't need Sage at all. I think it's quite true he [Dr. Stringham] did not, in my book, change our opinion whatsoever. He did not enlighten us too much either . . . Stringham and the Sage people could have stayed in Edmonton and saved \$60,000.³⁴⁰

Most of these critics however indicated that the Sage study did provide time for consideration and dialogue. The trustee previously quoted indicated this in the following comment:

It [the idea of reorganization] was brought on gradually. If the Department officials had come one day and said this is what we think you should be doing, then it would have been different. It [Sage] was just buying time and leaving this thing to penetrate our minds.

A local administrator had a similar view. After indicating that reorganization could have been done "easily without Sage," he stated:

I think Sage was used as the door opener . . . It provided a time for dialogue and making people aware of certain things that could be happening and getting input into the way ahead . . . Without that it could just as well have been reorganized, no ifs or buts about it.³⁴¹

Another experienced trustee had a different opinion. He linked the value of the Sage study to the previously noted mistrust that seemed to have existed between local trustees and Department of Education officials. He claimed:

We were not very ready to listen to the Department people at that time. Some of them we listened to well, but we felt that we had been really betrayed by one or two of them and it did color our thinking. As a result, when Sage did come in and reviewed it carefully, I think we looked at it a little more objectively than we would have otherwise.³⁴²

Two present trustees who had participated as representatives of community groups in the Sage rating process also had more positive opinions. A trustee of the new Separate District commented:

I think it [the Sage study] did [make a difference]. Yes, it provided some information that we knew more or less. It concretized a lot of things. I definitely think it did. It also provided, afterward, a document we could relate to.³⁴³

A present public system trustee, who had been a leading member of the A-Quest group, also had a positive perception of the worth of the Sage study:

I think it had its advantages. I think the Minister wanted an outside group. He had had his own Department go into this area [but] he wanted the opinion and data from an outside group. And I think that [it] is many time more desirable . . . to have an

³⁴⁰C. Vincent, Interview.

³⁴¹W. Hayduk, Interview.

³⁴²E. Edstrom, Interview.

³⁴³J. C. Lajoie, Interview, 9 November 1983.

outside group come in and evaluate. So I thought it was a step in the right direction. I really did.³⁴⁴

This trustee expressed particular appreciation for both the extent to which community opinions were sought and the worth of the final **Report**:

I think the parent group [A-Quest] was really happy that they were allowed the opportunity to bring up their concerns and participate . . . I was amazed to read through his study and see some of the comments he had made there. They were good comments.³⁴⁵

Opinions among local trustees on the Steering Committee varied as to the value of the Sage study. Although, as previously noted, several had negative views, others were quite positive. When criticism of the study was voiced in the Committee, other trustees were prepared to defend its worth.³⁴⁶

In relation to the criticism that reorganization could have been achieved without the Sage study, Dr. Stringham replied:

That may be true. I don't know whether they [District #2665 and Division #46] would have or not. But the point is that in seventy-five years they had been continuing to divide; that nothing had ever gone on that had unified them, for even a short period of time. Oh, they had built a school together in Bonnyville. They are still going to get separated. They had been in the problem of destroying their cooperation rather than building it . . . I would say why had it [reorganization] not happened before?

Not all the former trustees and administrators of District #2665 and Division #46 would have agreed with Dr. Stringham's conclusion. Some saw cooperation growing, albeit slowly, during the two years prior to reorganization.³⁴⁷ Perhaps it was this increasing willingness to solve problems cooperatively that provided fertile ground within which the Sage study process was able to generate agreement among all the Boards to accepting a coterminous, district structure. The Sage process itself may have enabled Steering Committee participants to see things in a somewhat different light and to think they could have achieved the same objectives themselves. They may not have realized that the process itself may have been a major factor in their adoption of a broader perspective.

Department of Education administrators had positive views as to the worth of the Sage study. The Steering Committee chairman suggested that because the study had based its identification of major problems on a sampling process, its findings provided a substantial guide as to future directions. In conjunction, the presence of "goodwill" among the key

³⁴⁴R. Piper, Interview, 23 November 1983.

³⁴⁵R. Piper, Interview.

³⁴⁶B. L. Stringham, Interview.

³⁴⁷C. Vincent, Interview; A. Ryll, Interview; S. Skuba, Interview.

participants and the time factor were significant.

It's fair to say that it [the Sage study] was one of the major factors. This idea [was] that here is a kind of sampling process. On the basis of this sample, this is the way the majority in that sample would like to go. [This] is usually a pretty good indication . . . [of] how the general public would think in the long run. But I say that the Sage study was one of the solutions to the problem. The other . . . [was that] the Committee itself were people of goodwill. They were willing to listen [and] to discuss. And I think another factor, but a major factor was the fact that it took some time to arrive at a decision.

Local opinion sampling and the provision of time may be credited to the Sage process. While goodwill was independently present, the Sage study seemingly provided an operational framework within which it could be utilized to optimal effect.

Another Department of Education administrator had a somewhat different perspective of the Sage process, though still positive. He identified two particular contributions. It "brought the issues into sharp focus and made them self-evident."³⁴⁸ Also, it enabled the major procedural difficulty of the reorganization to be overcome, i.e. seven boards agreed to request their own dissolution:

. . . you were asking the number of jurisdictions there were to in fact order their own demise. It doesn't matter what kind of organization you're talking to, the worst scenario for them is to wipe themselves out. It's just not akin to human to do that.³⁴⁹

He added that "because the change went through relatively smoothly, it [the Sage process] must have had a positive impact."³⁵⁰

D. Conclusion

A combination of factors influenced the decision by the Minister of Education to attempt to find a more satisfactory solution to the long-standing conflicts over education in the Bonnyville area than had resulted from previous ad hoc approaches. In light of the stated provincial policy on educational language rights, a number of francophone parents living in Division #46 areas had embarked on a concerted campaign to seek provincial involvement in their attempt to gain access to French language education for their children. Early in 1979, the new MLA for Bonnyville, using his detailed knowledge of the local educational scene, also sought Ministerial action to attempt to resolve educational conflicts in the constituency. The proposed oil-based economic development then anticipated for the area, highlighted the difficulties of coordinated educational planning when jurisdictional responsibility was so

³⁴⁸W. R. Duke, Interview, 24 January 1984.

³⁴⁹W. R. Duke, Interview.

³⁵⁰W. R. Duke, Interview.

fragmented.

Support for the principle of local autonomy in educational affairs as well as legal rights guaranteed to the minority religious group required that long term planning both to solve the jurisdictional conflicts and meet the needs of the expected population influx be attempted on a cooperative basis. By use of a Steering Committee comprising both provincial and local representatives and a study methodology that maximized local input, the Sage Institute was able to eventually lead all the former jurisdictions to agree to accept a major jurisdictional restructuring for the area.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION

After the final working meeting of the Steering Committee at the end of July 1980, the completed **Sage Report** was forwarded to the Minister of Education in early August. Although the actual **Report** was the responsibility of the Sage Institute, in its major recommendation it carried the support of each of the local jurisdictions. An analysis of the reasons that engendered such a commitment on the part of local Boards is relevant for an examination of the implementation of the reorganization. This is the focus of the first section of the chapter.

In the second section of the chapter, factors pertaining to the Ministerial decision to implement the major recommendation of the Report are discussed. The final section in the chapter contains an outline of the administrative and legal procedures used to implement the reorganization of the area's school districts.

A. Local Support for School District Reorganization

The groundwork for successful implementation of the reorganization recommendation was laid in the consultancy process conducted by the Sage Institute. Rather than largely relying on their own judgement and expertise in the formation of recommendations, the process used by the Sage Institute is predominantly guided by the knowledge and expertise of local participants.

As previously outlined, Sage personnel undertook an extensive data collection program in the local communities through both personal interviews and public meetings. The fault tree which depicted possible reasons for the failure of the mission statement was validated by the Steering Committee. Ratings to identify significant issues were completed by 125 representatives, the majority of whom were representatives of local interest groups. Identification of the key governance problem and the development of alternate solution strategies was completed in close association with the Steering Committee. The culmination of the process was a commitment from each of the seven jurisdictions to accept implementation of the agreed recommendation.

A number of factors that significantly impinged upon the deliberations of the area Boards in favour of reorganization were identified. These were (a) the distribution of

assessment revenue from the Esso plant, (b) the perspective of Division #46 trustees, (c) a change of view by Dr. B. Brosseau and other trustees of District #2665 and (d) the emergence of an increasing desire on the part of trustees from various Boards for a more cooperative approach to resolving educational conflicts and a resultant attitude of mutual goodwill. A number of factors of lesser importance were also noted. These are now discussed.

Assessment Revenue from Esso Plant

From the perspective of the three Roman Catholic town based systems, the prospect of sharing in the assessment revenues that could be expected when the Esso oil-sands plant became operational was the major incentive in their decision to accept reorganization. As one District #2665 trustee stated, "Let's be frank about it, the main thing was that pot of gold."³⁵¹

These Boards, being centred in the three main towns, were faced with the prospect of considerable expansion and a new student clientele likely to require more expensive educational services (e.g., special education, remedial education, vocational training.) However, as the oil plants would be situated outside their boundaries, they would not share in the assessment revenue generated. The same trustee continued:

. . . I think it was [the most important factor]. There were very few other items. That was the big reason. . . We would have all the problems but no revenue from it. I think that was the main reason.³⁵²

A trustee of Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67 similarly commented, "That [oil revenue] was the big lever that made us decide to go into . . . one large board."³⁵³ Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64 trustees were also concerned. Being a Separate District within the town boundaries, they too could not expect to receive oil plant assessment revenues. As early as June 1979 the Board of Separate District #64 wrote to the Minister of Education regarding "the effect of the proposed heavy oil project on the Town of Cold Lake in general and on the boundaries of Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D #64 in particular."³⁵⁴

As previously indicated, this matter had been raised with the Minister during his visit to the area in May 1979. The Minister has suggested in correspondence, previously quoted, that the Esso project and its implications were not the major factors in his decision to seek the

³⁵¹C. Vincent, Interview.

³⁵²C. Vincent, Interview.

³⁵³J. Coulombe, Interview, 10 November 1983.

³⁵⁴Correspondence, R. Lirette to D. King, 8 June 1979.

reorganization of the jurisdictions.³⁵⁵ Nevertheless, he was aware that differential access to oil plant assessment revenue had the potential to add to jurisdictional difficulties in the area.³⁵⁶ As well, it provided a political rationale by which the local jurisdictions would accept provincial intervention and reorganization as the price to be paid for access to oil plant assessment.³⁵⁷

One Department of Education administrator commented in relation to Cold Lake Separate, although his comments could also apply to Grand Centre Separate:

They [Cold Lake #64] wouldn't get any money out of the potential tax revenue and it was probable that they would be inundated; swamped either by students that they could not afford to have, or by people going to the public school system that could afford it and they would just wither and die.³⁵⁸

Faced with such a situation, neither of these Separate Boards could afford to remain outside the proposed reorganization. Although it was in no danger of withering, neither could Bonnyville #2665 financially afford to remain aloof from reorganization.

Pressure was applied by the government through Department of Education personnel. Smaller boards were given to understand that if they did not accept reorganization they could expect no oil plant revenue.³⁵⁹ Law was on the side of the government which indicated that even if it wished to distribute oil plant assessment to the Catholic boards, amendment to the **British North America Act** would be required.³⁶⁰ There was no prospect of such an amendment being attempted at a time of national political struggle to patriate the Canadian constitution.

Division #46 Compliance

Assessment revenue was not as significant an issue for the Division as for District #2665 and Cold Lake and Grand Centre Separate Districts. Because it had a number of proposed oil-sands plants within its boundaries, the revenue from the large Esso plant assumed a lesser importance. Although some respondents indicated that the Division had most to lose in reorganization, this perspective was not universally accepted.³⁶¹

³⁵⁵Correspondence, D. King to R. Iles.

³⁵⁶As noted earlier, this matter was raised by each of the Catholic Boards in their discussions with the Minister during his visit to the area on 16 and 17 May 1979.

³⁵⁷E. A. Torgunrud, Interview, 1 February 1984.

³⁵⁸J. Thiessen, Interview, 31 January 1984. Although the Esso oil plant was also outside Division #46 territory, there were other, albeit, small projects within the Division that would return it assessment revenue.

³⁵⁹B. L. Stringham, Interview.

³⁶⁰Steering Committee, Minutes, 30 July 1980.

³⁶¹A. Ryll, Interview.

A number of factors influenced the decision by the Divisional Board to accept reorganization. First, there was "a feeling of confidence that if this [reorganization] could be done, it could become a partial solution, at least, to the problems which were insoluble at the time."³⁶² The problems generated by some francophone and some Roman Catholic electors of the Division demanding transportation to District #2665 schools had plagued the Divisional Board for many years. Trustees were tired of the conflict and the constant struggle to protect the Division's limited financial resources. In reorganization, problems associated with providing French language instruction and Catholic religious education would be turned over to a new separate board. A former chairman of the Division stated, "We said this is one area where we in Division #46 can unload this whole problem by going along with this proposal."³⁶³ There was a view among Divisional trustees that the governance structure had never worked very well, and maybe the proposed new structure would work more satisfactorily.³⁶⁴

In addition, there was a perception that the actual operation of the Divisional system would not be greatly affected by reorganization. Although it would lose several hundred Roman Catholic resident students, in all likelihood most of these children would continue to attend Divisional schools by tuition agreement. The subdivisinal structure of representation on the Board would also change. But for the most part, the Divisional system would continue to function under the name of the new public district. Although the Division would lose some of its assessment base in rural areas, it would gain the public assessment in the town of Bonnyville which it had sought over many years. The chairman of the Steering Committee acknowledged that, "largely it was incumbent on #46 to throw in the towel on some of the issues for which it had fought."³⁶⁵

In summary, the Division appears to have had insufficient reasons to fight against reorganization. One Department of Education administrator summed up the Division's attitude on reorganization saying, "People just went along with it because they saw no reason to fight it."³⁶⁶

³⁶²A. Edstrom, Interview.

³⁶³A. Edstrom, Interview.

³⁶⁴R. Penrice, Interview.

³⁶⁵S. N. Odynak, Interview.

³⁶⁶W. R. Duke, Interview.

A Change of Perspective

As discussed earlier, the leaders of Bonnyville S.D. #2665 were largely motivated by their desire to protect the francophone and Roman Catholic orientation of their system. Indicative of this were (a) the defensiveness and suspicion evident in the reported comments of the chairman of #2665 at the time of the May 1979 visit to the area by the Minister of Education, and (b) the hesitation and constraining suggestions expressed by the superintendent in his June 1979 letter to the Minister.³⁶⁷

A combination of factors however led to a change in perspective by the leaders of District #2665. A major factor in the successful implementation of reorganization was the change of outlook on the part of Dr. B. Brosseau, chairman of District #2665. He was reportedly quite surprised when the Sage analysis showed that protection of French language and culture and Roman Catholic religious teaching were no longer issues for District #2665 supporters. It was also evident that people outside the francophone community were interested in French language and culture. On the other hand, many francophones were looking toward greater integration in the local English speaking society to take advantage of the changing employment patterns, which was hindered by a poor facility in English. Dr. Brosseau seemingly realised that the leadership group in the francophone community needed to start cooperating in the provision of total educational services for all, including bilingual education, otherwise there was a considerable danger that they would be squeezed out of the educational scene, partly by their own people.³⁶⁸

The chairman of the Steering Committee referred to the importance of the changed perspective adopted by Dr. Brosseau. He commented:

Initially Bernie looked at the whole process a little sceptically. But he was willing to listen and he became committed to the study; to the whole process of negotiation and discussion and so on. And I'm under no illusion that if he hadn't changed his opinion of bureaucrats . . . if he hadn't changed his mind, the project was belly up.³⁶⁹

Another Department of Education administrator suggested that once Dr. Brosseau realised that the people of District #2665 would not have to pay a price with respect to the preservation of their religious and linguistic heritage and could retain the right to provide high school education, he was prepared to support reorganization.³⁷⁰ In fact, by the concluding

³⁶⁷M. Beaudoin to D. King.

³⁶⁸B. L. Stringham, Interview.

³⁶⁹S. N. Odynak, Interview.

³⁷⁰E. A. Torgunrud, Interview.

stages of the study it had become increasingly evident that, with the prospect of rapid population growth, reorganization into a separate school system would provide an organizational structure in which religious and linguistic rights could be better protected.

A third Department of Education administrator also expressed an opinion that confirmed the importance of the role played by Dr. B. Brosseau.

His style and his general philosophy were representative of a lot of people in the community. When Bernie went along with the notion, he carried a lot of people with him. I think he was one of the key people in getting the plan implemented because as soon as you have a number of boards dissolving themselves, that means there has been a lot of local homework done by persons who are opinion leaders and enjoy the confidence of other persons and thereby can bring about change. . .³⁷¹

Having accepted the need for reorganization, Dr. Brosseau exercised considerable influence in generating support for the implementation of a coterminous district structure. Along with the other trustees from District #2665 and with both acting superintendent Decoux and, from July 1980, superintendent Beaudoin, Dr. Brosseau ensured support for reorganization not only from within District #2665 but also worked to overcome some of the fears held by trustees of Cold Lake and Grand Centre Separate systems. A Departmental administrator summed up this local initiative in the following words:

I think that some local key actors took people from the backside of the fence and either put them on the fence or moved them to the positive side and permitted the change to go forward.³⁷²

District #2665 representative on the Steering Committee, C. Vincent, as well as a number of teachers and priests, also played effective, though less vocal, roles in building support in the Catholic community for reorganization.³⁷³

In similar vein, the General Manager of the Sage Institute commented that there were other people in the area, less visible than Dr. Brosseau, who were also ready to move in that direction [reorganization] and he was able to provide the leadership to form a more cohesive movement.³⁷⁴

Neither Dr. Odynak nor Dr. Stringham could be sure that the reorganization proposal would be accepted by the local communities when it was announced at a public meeting with the Minister in Bonnyville on 3 September 1980.³⁷⁵ However, the groundwork had already been successfully done by Dr. Brosseau. According to Dr. Stringham:

³⁷¹W. R. Duke, Interview.

³⁷²W. R. Duke, Interview.

³⁷³Correspondence, M. Beaudoin to R. Iles 5 June 1984.

³⁷⁴R. L. Holland, Interview 18 January 1984.

³⁷⁵B. L. Stringham; S. N. Odynak, Interviews.

Bernie was the individual in the Bonnyville area who said it's the only way we can go. When we look at all these issues it's the only thing that we can do, and he pushed it. So by the time that meeting [3 September] was held, the homework had been done already by Bernie Brosseau and his friends.³⁷⁶

Finally, in answer to a question concerning the changed perspective of Dr. Brosseau and other District #2665 leaders, the Minister of Education commented, "In retrospect, I believe the change in perspective (your words) of key leaders was very significant in enabling me to implement reorganization."³⁷⁷

The Emergence of Cooperative Attitudes

After the establishment of the Regional High School District, cooperation between the two Bonnyville Boards slowly increased. Having a joint responsibility for the operation of the high school promoted discussion and some resolution of other educational problems (e.g. progress in solving transportation difficulties). But, as has been shown, problems and tensions remained. These, however, did not usually produce direct inter-board conflict although transportation issues were still the cause of some antagonism at the time of reorganization.³⁷⁸

While both Boards upheld the value of cooperative relations, other factors were often given higher value. The Division was concerned with protecting its financial resources and the viability of programs in its smaller schools, while the District placed preservation of linguistic and religious rights ahead of cooperation. The Sage study appears to have provided a situation in which the major concerns of each Board were guaranteed protection, thus enabling the cultivation of an atmosphere in which productive discussion could occur.³⁷⁹ A former superintendent of Division #46 commented that Sage was "a vehicle for bringing spokespeople together." It enabled a group of opinion leaders from the different boards to agree as a group on what they wanted to achieve. The massive local input, together with the process itself, provided a unique tool. He claimed that he didn't "know of any tool that would have accomplished the same end."³⁸⁰

³⁷⁶B. L. Stringham, Interview.

³⁷⁷Correspondence, D. King to R. Iles, March 1984.

³⁷⁸e.g. In the first week of September 1980 an Ardmore francophone family was seeking transportation by the Division for their children to Notre Dame schools in Bonnyville.

³⁷⁹These were expressed as Critical Success Factors to achieving the Mission objective.

³⁸⁰G. Kuschminder, Interview, 1 February 1984.

The positive attitudes displayed by the local representatives from an early stage in the Steering Committee's deliberations were an essential factor in helping to provide an environment in which coterminous public and separate Districts, as provided for in scenario IIIA, could be proposed, accepted and implemented. The chairman of the Committee described the local representatives as "people of goodwill, really of goodwill." He commented:

If they [the local representatives] had been posturing, the whole project would have gone down the drain. But they were very sincere. And they wanted to see a solution to the problems . . . when you can get people thinking in the interests of the children of the area and looking forward, I would imagine, to the expansion of educational facilities and yet, protecting their religious and language preferences, I felt we were on easy street. On no occasion did I have to stonewall anything; to keep postponing a decision until we could align everybody in one direction. They proposed the direction that we should go in.³⁸¹

He indicated that similar attitudes were shown by the superintendent of Division #46 and the acting superintendent of District #2665. Two other Department of Education representatives expressed similar standpoints.³⁸²

Certainly the display of goodwill must be viewed in context. The Minister had hinted fairly clearly that unless a cooperative solution was found to the long standing educational problems in the area, he would consider imposing one. Such indications were contained not only in his public statements at the time of his 1979 visit to the area, but in correspondence with complainants. For example, in March 1980 he wrote to francophone parents in Therien who had been refused transport of their child to Mallaig by Division #46:

Under the circumstances, it is my intention to contact the Board of Bonnyville School Division personally to determine whether their present stand on this matter is one that cannot be changed. If indeed it is a position that is inflexible, I shall then have to consider other procedures to facilitate your request.³⁸³

Many of the local leaders were tired of the conflict and were willing to look to more cooperative approaches. The Sage process appears to have maximized this potential for cooperation.

Although it was the lure of oil plant assessment revenue that brought the representatives together on the Steering Committee, it was the Sage process that provided a non-threatening environment in which to explore alternate viewpoints. One Departmental administrator suggested that, as discussion developed, local representatives saw that their points of view may not have been as diverse as they had thought. Also, while representatives were

powerful . . . within their own small community, the preservation of such power in the face of both demographic change and Ministerial threat, required that they

³⁸¹S. N. Odynak, Interview.

³⁸²W. R. Duke; E. A. Torgunrud, Interviews.

³⁸³Correspondence, D. King to I. & Y. Feland, 4 March 1980.

cooperate. They could still maintain some of the self-interest kinds of things that they were interested in keeping, but yet, would be able to accommodate the needs of other people.³⁸⁴

This was particularly important for leaders of District #2665. If they were to protect their religious and linguistic heritage, they had to cooperate in a larger Catholic separate school system. While such a system would be religiously homogeneous, it would not be francophone; however, given the role central Bonnyville people would undoubtedly play in it, francophone interests could be strongly supported. The adoption of such a position required a departure from the isolationist and self protective stances that had previously characterized that District.

Another factor that assisted in the generation of cooperation among local representatives was the role played by the chairman of the Steering Committee. Through his detailed personal knowledge of that area of Alberta, his low key and non-threatening style of chairing meetings of the Committee, and his considerable understanding of the structure of Education in Alberta he gained the respect and cooperation of local representatives. Realizing the importance of informal socializing among Committee members, he successfully requested the Minister's approval for the Department to cover meal and travel expenses of the local representatives as well as to pay them an honorarium.³⁸⁵ Not only did such consideration suggest to members the importance the government placed on the work of the Committee, but enabled the whole committee to socialize informally over meal breaks. The groundwork for cooperative decision-making was often laid at such informal gatherings where more personal relations and friendships could be developed.³⁸⁶

Other Factors

From the beginning of the intervention, it was evident that the Minister intended to act to solve long standing disputes. As noted, he had forewarned the local Boards that should a cooperative solution not be implemented, he would impose some form of district reorganization. However, an agreed solution was greatly preferred, and to this end Departmental administrators indicated to the area Boards that everything possible would be done to ensure the success of the proposed new districts. One Departmental administrator commented:

³⁸⁴J. Thiessen, Interview.

³⁸⁵Memorandum, S. N. Odynak to E. K. Hawkesworth, 8 November 1979.

³⁸⁶E. A. Torgunrud; W. R. Duke, Interviews.

I think . . . there was a good understanding that they would have the full cooperation of the department . . . We were going to throw away, in part, the regulating constraints and treat this one as a developmental project in a sense and come up with new solutions to new problems. . . that's something that transcends the records . . . it was a sharing that this is going to work.³⁸⁷

The Sage study process gave the local representatives on the Steering Committee time to consider the whole range of relevant factors and consult with their Boards and relevant others to ensure support for the direction that was being proposed. In particular, it also provided opportunity for representatives from the smaller Separate Districts in Cold Lake and Grand Centre to convince their Boards of the wisdom of two coterminous districts. This was especially important in the case of Cold Lake whose Board had the greatest number of reservations.

Finally, both the Department of Education and District #2665 consulted relevant others. Both the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta and the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association were consulted and expressed their agreement with the proposed reorganization. In addition, the Roman Catholic Bishop of St. Paul was kept informed of what was proposed:

The Bishop was made aware of what was going on and he favoured it. Let's face it, it was providing the possibility of a Catholic education to all Catholics in the area.³⁸⁸

Although the influence of local parish priests on education in Cold Lake and Grand Centre would be diminished by the organization of a large Catholic district, they were not in any position to object, even if they had wished to, since the creation of coterminous Catholic divisions in rural Alberta was long standing Catholic policy.³⁸⁹ The proposed coterminous district structure in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area would create an Alberta precedent for giving effect to this policy.

Despite the validity of subsequent factors in support of reorganization discussed in this section, the issue of gaining access to assessment revenue from the Esso oil plant was the predominant factor in the minds of many local trustees. The importance of the Esso project is attested by those who suggested that had it been known in September 1980 that the Esso project was not going to proceed in the manner anticipated, the reorganization probably would not have occurred.³⁹⁰ Thus, belief that the project would proceed was a necessary but not sufficient

³⁸⁷W. R. Duke, Interview.

³⁸⁸C. Vincent, Interview.

³⁸⁹Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association, Brief to the Commission on School District Boundaries, 1 September 1974.

³⁹⁰W. Hayduk; L. Bujold; R. Ward, Interviews.

condition for acceptance of the reorganization strategy. A change of perspective for District #2665 and the participatory consultative Sage process maximized the potential for cooperative decision-making among the key local opinion leaders on the Steering Committee. Also significant was the supportive role assumed by Department of Education administrators.

B. The Ministerial Decision

After the final working meeting of the Steering Committee at the end of July 1980, the **Sage Report** was forwarded by the Sage Institute to the Minister of Education in early August. Because of the close interest he had maintained in the progress of the study, the Minister was well aware of the major recommendations contained in the **Report**.³⁹¹ He was also aware of the positive commitment all local representatives had made on behalf of their Boards to accept the reorganization proposal.

If the evidence contained in the previously cited memorandum to his Deputy is accepted,³⁹² the Minister had determined as early as April 1979 that a reorganization of school jurisdictions was necessary if the educational conflicts of the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area of Alberta were to be reduced to a more manageable level.

A coterminous district structure appeared most likely to provide long-term solutions to the several difficulties that were of concern to the Minister. In the Steering Committee deliberations, once the three most influential local representatives indicated that a coterminous district structure was the most appropriate solution, Department of Education representatives also agreed.³⁹³ Departmental administrators would not likely endorse a particular course of action even within the Steering Committee unless they were relatively sure that it would be acceptable to the Minister. Thus, the Minister had probably made a general decision to support the coterminous jurisdiction solution even prior to his receipt of the **Sage Report**. After the Report was received, the major questions that confronted the Minister and his Department seem to have been when and how should the reorganization occur.

³⁹¹After each Steering Committee meeting the Minister received a copy of the Minutes as well as a briefing by Dr. Odynak.

³⁹²Memorandum, D. King to E. K. Hawkesworth, 11 April 1979.

³⁹³S. N. Odynak, Interview.

Timing of Implementation

From a relatively early stage in the consultancy process, the Minister and senior Departmental administrators were mindful of the triennial school board elections slated for October 1980. In his initial letter to school boards of 31 May 1979, the Minister had indicated a fifteen month time scale for the proposed study which would allow for it to be completed prior to the 1980 elections. Several Departmental administrators referred to an implicit time frame. One said, "I think the Minister was working to some time constraint"³⁹⁴ while another assured the researcher that although it may not have been stated explicitly, "implicit . . . it was in the minds of the Departmental people and the Minister."³⁹⁵

Obviously, there were significant advantages in completing reorganization before the term of office of the current Boards expired. Also, there was the undesirable possibility that reorganization could become a local election issue.

A second aspect of timing related to the commencement date of the Esso project. The need for reorganization was, in the minds of area trustees, closely associated with the gaining of access to the anticipated assessment revenues to be generated by the oil-sands plant. Because the unanimous local endorsement of the coterminous district reorganization had been premised on this expectation, the **Sage Report** recommended that the Minister delay the implementation until a final approval was accorded to the project by the provincial government.³⁹⁶

Whether or not, as a member of Cabinet, the Minister had access to confidential information on this matter, he decided to proceed immediately. According to a Departmental administrator the Minister thought that it was not going to be any easier if and when Esso went ahead. Therefore, it was better to ride the crest on the possibility that it would.³⁹⁷ When it is remembered that, to the Minister, the proposed Esso project had provided a "window of opportunity" to address other more serious problems, the decision to proceed with the reorganization immediately is understandable.³⁹⁸

To decrease the number of school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area appears to have been a part of the Ministerial and Departmental hidden agenda throughout the consultancy process.³⁹⁹ It was hoped that such a restructuring would serve to

³⁹⁴S. N. Odynak, Interview.

³⁹⁵E. A. Torgunrud, Interview.

³⁹⁶**Sage Report** p. 59, R. 10.

³⁹⁷E. A. Torgunrud, Interview.

³⁹⁸D. King to R. Iles.

³⁹⁹E. A. Torgunrud, Interview.

mitigate some of the area's long-standing educational conflicts. Anticipation of very large assessment revenues from the proposed Esso oil-sands plant provided opportunity for the Minister to intervene to address some of these difficulties. Having achieved a consensus for reorganization from the local boards based on the anticipation that the plant would go ahead, to delay further likely would have doomed the whole exercise.⁴⁰⁰

C. Reorganization Procedures

Having decided to proceed immediately to implement the agreed reorganization, the Minister's primary concern following his receipt of the **Report** appears to have been to identify the administrative and legal requirements necessary for implementation. The absence from Departmental files of a formal statement from the Deputy Minister recommending the adoption and implementation of the dual jurisdictional solution of scenario IIIA of the **Sage Report** suggests that no recommendation was ever requested. Rather, the only significant memorandum from the Department to the Minister on the planned reorganization was concerned with procedural matters.⁴⁰¹

Events moved very quickly after the receipt of the **Report** in early August. If the Minister was to act in regard to reorganization and forestall rapidly approaching school board elections in the area, he had to do so by 10 September. Otherwise, on that date local Boards would be obliged to call for nominations in order to meet the provisions of the **Electoral Act**.

Review of Recommended Procedures

On the 26 August 1980, the Director of Field Services, Dr. Torgunrud and the Assistant Director, W. T. Worbets, met with Dr. Stringham of the Sage Institute to review the procedures required to implement scenario IIIA of the **Sage Report**. At that meeting Worbets questioned the need for what he has later termed "the heavy arm approach."⁴⁰² He considered the procedures outlined by Dr. Stringham in the **Sage Report** to be unnecessarily legalistic and time consuming.⁴⁰³ However, as stated earlier, Dr. Stringham believed them to be legally necessary to satisfy the provisions of the **School Act 1970**; **Alberta Act 1905**; and **North West Territories Ordinance 1901**.

⁴⁰⁰G. Kuschminder, Interview.

⁴⁰¹Memorandum, E. K. Hawkesworth to D. King, 27 August 1980.

⁴⁰²Correspondence, W. T. Worbets to R. Iles, 2 March 1984.

⁴⁰³Correspondence, W. T. Worbets to R. Iles, 2 March 1984.

On page 1 of his memorandum to the Minister on reorganization, the Deputy Minister provided an outline of the procedures advised by Dr. Stringham and an indication of their legal basis.⁴⁰⁴ The procedures are summarized in sequence below, (a) refers to the **action** stipulated, (b) refers to the **process** required, and (c) refers to the **legal provisions** for (a) and (b):

1. (a) Dissolution of Duclos
 (b) Board resolution by Division #46, Plebiscite and Ministerial Order
 (c) **School Act** 1970, Section 56 (S 58 in Revised Act 1980.)
2. (a) Expansion of Bonnyville S.D.#2665 to include all public school districts (with exception of four districts where separate districts existed), heavy oil territory, Metis Settlement #9 and other unorganized territory
 (b) Ministerial Order
 (c) **School Act** 1970, Section 18 (S 17 in Revised Act 1980.)
3. (a) Dissolution of Regional District #4
 (b) Ministerial Order
 (c) **School Act** 1970, Section 25 (S 24 in Revised Act 1980.)
4. (a) Dissolution of Bonnyville S. Div.#46
 (b) Ministerial Order
 (c) **School Act** 1970, Section 25 (S 24 in Revised Act 1980.)
5. (a) Establishment of a Roman Catholic separate district coterminous with expanded public district (2a above)
 (b) Petition, Public Meeting and Vote, and Ministerial Order
 (c) **School Act** 1970, Sections 50, 51 (S 52 in Revised Act 1980.)
6. (a) Inclusion of four excluded public districts in the expanded public district and simultaneously include the four separate districts in the new, coterminous separate district
 (b) Ministerial Order
 (c) **School Act** 1970, Section 18 (S 17 in Revised Act 1980.)

On page two of the Deputy's memorandum four alternative means by which the foregoing statutory requirements might be implemented were presented. Two of the alternatives were intended to defer the elections by the appointment of two Official Trustees by either (i) the local Boards or (ii) the Minister. The Official Trustees (one for public electors and the

⁴⁰⁴E. K. Hawkesworth to D. King.

other for Roman Catholic separate electors) would then implement the listed statutory requirements. A third alternative required that the seven Boards proceed with the elections and that the required legal processes be implemented sequentially.

The fourth alternative appears not so much to have been a means to undertake the listed statutory provisions, but rather a modified, less complicated set of statutory requirements by which to implement scenario IIIA. These modified statutory requirements were drawn up by Assistant Director Worbets and represent his alternative to the procedures listed in the **Sage Report**. The Worbets' procedures were outlined in five steps:

1. Request that each Board, including Medley, pass motions recommending that the Minister implement scenario IIIA
2. The Minister dissolve all districts pursuant to Section 25 of the **School Act 1970**
3. The Minister establish a new public district to include all required areas
4. Appoint an Official Trustee to administer the newly established public district and to commence election procedures by 10 September 1980.
5. Request that the minority group (Roman Catholic electors) petition to establish a separate district.

The Deputy Minister concluded the memorandum with the brief statement, "I recommend that Alternative 1 [the Worbet's alternative] be followed because the concept can be implemented in a shorter period of time."⁴⁰⁵ Faced with the legal, administrative and political complexities inherent in such a recommendation, a more detailed rationale might have been expected. However, given the very tight time constraints within which both the Department and the Minister were working, much of the planning for the impending reorganization was done orally. Considering the precedent creating nature of the reorganization, surprisingly few Departmental memoranda appear to have been written. For example, in a letter to the researcher, W. T. Worbets indicated that, because of time constraints, he had only informally reviewed the suggested procedures with a member from the Attorney General's Department prior to the public meeting held in Bonnyville with the Minister on 3 September 1980.

In the week following the Deputy Minister's memorandum, the Minister evidently accepted the simplified Worbets' procedures for implementing the dual district recommendation of scenario IIIA of the **Sage Report**. Given the urgency imposed by forthcoming school board

⁴⁰⁵E. K. Hawkesworth to D. King.

elections and the likely difficulties to be experienced in implementing the reorganization after the present Boards' term expired, the Minister wanted to move quickly in the reorganization. The Worbets' procedures, which were based on a broader interpretation of the powers available to the Minister in relation to school district organization, together with long standing precedent, provided a quicker and more controllable set of procedures than the lengthier, less controllable, but legally tighter procedures listed by Dr. Stringham in the **Sage Report**.

Ministerial Public Meeting in Bonnyville

On 3 September, approximately 150 people met in Bonnyville to hear the Minister publicly unveil the reorganization proposal although its general thrust was well known in the area and had been discussed and editorialised in the local newspaper.⁴⁰⁶ This meeting has been referred to as "a typical laying on of the hands ceremony . . . [which] brings public legitimation and credibility to a decision."⁴⁰⁷ By this date the Minister had certainly resolved to implement the reorganization and probably had also decided to use the simplified procedures drafted by Worbets. The meeting provided him with an opportunity to confirm the nature of community support for the reorganization, to enable local leaders to be publicly seen requesting the Minister to act, and to publicly address a number of concerns that had come back to the Department, especially regarding the level of financial support that would be made available to the two new districts. The Minister's purpose has been described in the following words:

. . . his idea was to go out there and say, 'we support the concept, and not only that, we are going to help you make it work and these are some commitments I'm making to you today'.⁴⁰⁸

Although no details were publicly specified, the Minister gave a general undertaking that reorganization costs would be covered by the Department and that additional assistance would be made available. Similar assurances had been given privately to trustees by senior Department of Education administrators.⁴⁰⁹

Despite the Minister's long standing desire to implement a "reorganization"⁴¹⁰ of school boards in the Bonnyville area, the Minister publicly sought to place the onus for initiating action on the local Boards. According to a local report, he declared at the public meeting on 3

⁴⁰⁶Bonnyville Nouvelle, 8 July 1980, 5 August 1980.

⁴⁰⁷W. R. Duke, Interview.

⁴⁰⁸W. R. Duke, Interview.

⁴⁰⁹W. R. Duke, Interview.

⁴¹⁰Memorandum, D. King to E. K. Hawkesworth, April 1979.

September that he "would act on the recommendations of the school boards concerned pending their review of the Report, but not before."⁴¹¹ However, the prior acceptance of the major Sage study recommendation by the Boards was well known to the Minister. Thus, the threat of unilateral Ministerial action implied during his visit to the area in May 1979 receded completely and he was able to strongly assert his belief in local autonomy and state that, "Alberta Education is not going to impose its will on the boards or the community."⁴¹²

If the Minister was to exercise powers he claimed under Section 25 of the **School Act**, it would be politically prudent for him to be seen to be doing so at the request of the local Boards. Such a request was a major objective of his attendance at the public meeting in Bonnyville on 3 September. Dr. Stringham recounted that Dr. Brosseau asked at this meeting when a start was to be made on the Sage recommendations. The Minister is reported to have replied that the existence of a number of separate school districts created problems because he didn't have the authority to automatically dissolve such districts. He then indicated that if the boards of these districts were to indicate their desire for reorganization the matter would take on a different perspective. Within a few days the Minister had "petitions and motions."⁴¹³

Establishment of Beaver River School District #5460

On the 5 September, the Minister wrote to the seven Boards requesting them to express formally their acceptance of the major recommendation of the **Sage Report**. The Minister, "impressed with the perceptive and positive exchange" that occurred at the successful public meeting two days earlier, now seized the initiative in the implementation process. He wrote to the seven Boards proposing an appropriate resolution and an outline of the procedures to be implemented in achieving a school district reorganization for the area:

As the next stage in the cooperative endeavour, I have attached a proposed resolution and procedures for accomplishing a reorganization of the school jurisdictions in the area. If your resolution with respect to this matter is forwarded to my office before Wednesday, September 10, 1980, members of Field Services, Alberta Education, working with your senior administrators, will initiate the procedures. Please note that if your response is not available before the above date, your board is obliged to proceed with advertisements for nominations and elections for your jurisdiction as currently established.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹¹Bonnyville Nouvelle, 9 September 1980, p. 1.

⁴¹²Bonnyville Nouvelle, 9 September 1980, p. 1.

⁴¹³B. L.Stringham, Interview.

⁴¹⁴Correspondence, D. King to Chairman, Bonnyville S.Div.#46, Bonnyville S.D.#2665, Bonnyville R.S.D.#4, Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64, Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67, Medley S.D.#5092, Northland S.Div.#61, 5 September 1980.

As previously noted, 10 September was the last day the reorganization could be set in motion due to the dictates of the **Election Act**. Therefore, if the momentum generated by the public meeting on 3 September was to be harnessed, reorganization had to be commenced by 10 September at the latest so as to delay in the Bonnyville area the forthcoming elections. If this date could not be met, reorganization may have to be renegotiated with the new boards after the October elections.

Therefore, events moved quickly. The Minister's letter of 5 September, containing the suggested resolution and procedures for reorganization was rushed to the local boards that same day. The required resolution, which is quoted below, was based on (1) anticipation of rapid population growth, (2) the preservation of cultural, linguistic and religious preferences, and (3) equality of access to assessments. It requested implementation of Recommendation 13 notwithstanding any decision by Medley S.D.#5029 to join the new district or by Metis Colony #10 for inclusion into the County of St. Paul, both of which had been recommended in the **Sage Report**.

Whereas it is deemed advisable in light of rapid expansion in the area to reorganize school governance, and

Whereas it is deemed imperative that in reorganization, the cultural, linguistic and religious preferences of the residents be preserved, and

Whereas it is deemed advisable to have equitable access to assessment for school purposes, thus enhancing the potential for equitable student programming throughout the area.

Therefore be it resolved that the Minister proceed to effect Recommendation 13, of the Sage Institute of Canada report . . . notwithstanding the implementation or non-implementation of Sections (e) and (j), and that he do so in accordance with the following procedures.⁴¹⁵

The Board of Division #46 passed the resolution on the evening of 5 September. Other area boards met over the weekend of 6-7 September. By the morning of 10 September, the Minister had affirmative responses from six boards of the seven boards that operated schools in the area.⁴¹⁶ In addition, the boards of the two satellite Separate Districts also supported the resolution.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁵The listed procedures are discussed in this section. The outline of procedures that accompanied the required resolution are given in Appendix C.

⁴¹⁶Bonnyville S.Div. #46, Bonnyville S.D.#2665, Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64, Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67, Bonnyville R.S.D.#4 and Northland S.D.#61 on behalf of Elizabeth S.D.#4886.

⁴¹⁷Bevan R.C.S.S.D.#124 and Willow Trail R.C.S.S.D.#125.

Effective 8.00 p.m. on the 10 September 1980, the Minister of Education implemented the following through Ministerial Order (the legal authority cited for each action is given in brackets):

1. Dissolved Bonnyville S.Div.#46 together with the seventy school districts it contained, including Duclos P.S.S.D.#2. (Pursuant to Section 25 of the **School Act 1970**.)
2. Established Beaver River School District #5460 to be operated temporarily by two Official Trustees but with provision for a Board of Trustees. (Pursuant to Section 14 of the **School Act 1970**.)
3. Vested the assets of the dissolved Boards in the Beaver River School District #5460. (Pursuant to Section 22 of the **School Act 1970**.)
4. Dissolved Bonnyville S.D.#2665, Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64, Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67, Bevan R.C.S.S.D.#124 and Willow Trail R.C.S.S.D.#125 and Elizabeth S.D.#4886. (Pursuant to Section 25 of the **School Act 1970**.)
5. Dissolved Bonnyville R.S.D.#4 and provided for its continuing administration by the Official Trustees in accordance with the terms of the agreement between the former Division #46 and District #2665 and previous policies and financial arrangements.
6. Appointed two Official Trustees, Dr. Harold MacNeil and Mr. Roland Ward, to represent Roman Catholic and Protestant electors respectively in the Beaver River S.D.#5460.

In a letter dated 10 September 1980, the Minister assured each of the six Boards that the Official Trustees would administer its school(s) according to "the policies and budgets established by your board," and that their major focus would be "the prompt establishment of the two districts."⁴¹⁸ The letter also indicated that the Official Trustees and representatives from the Department of Education would meet with local administrators and trustees next morning, Thursday 11 September, to discuss the Orders.

Apart from attending to normal operational requirements of the schools, the major task of the Trustees was to prepare for the election of Boards of Trustees for the two new districts in early November. However, for Roman Catholic electors this first required the establishment of a separate district.

⁴¹⁸Correspondence, D. King to Chairman, Bonnyville S.Div.#46, Bonnyville S.D.#2665, Bonnyville R.S.D. #4, Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64, Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67 and Northland S.D.#61.

Establishment of Lakeland Roman Catholic Separate School District #150

In the procedures outlined by the Minister, Wednesday 24 September had been nominated as the date for Roman Catholic electors to meet and vote on the formation of a separate school district coterminous with the new Beaver River S.D.#5460 in accordance with Sections 50 and 51 of the *School Act* 1970.

Over 500 people attended the well organized meeting, which was commenced by the chairman remarking:

We are about to commence a historic event in this room this evening. The question we are about to decide is one of significant precedent in the province of Alberta . . . The proposal is unique . . . Never before has this alternative been available in a rural area.⁴¹⁹

Events leading to the dissolution of the previous Boards, the creation of Beaver River S.D.#5460 and the calling of the meeting of Roman Catholic electors of District #5460 were explained. The advantages of establishing a Roman Catholic district were outlined. These were listed in a memorandum prepared by Superintendent Beaudoin and included (1) access to a larger tax base, (2) opportunity to develop the administrative structure and services of Catholic education in the area, (3) the guarantee of a Catholic system, (4) a Catholic separate system accessible to all Catholics in the area, (5) former Division electors would have a right to participate and vote in a Catholic system, (6) by establishing the separate district now it would have time to plan for the expected growth, and (7) a coordinated transport plan with the public district would be possible. The major disadvantage suggested in the memorandum would be the loss of autonomy that each of the Catholic districts had formerly enjoyed. However, such autonomy disappeared at the time of dissolution so that failure to support a new Catholic system at that meeting would have resulted in all residents remaining in public District #5460.

Although the Roman Catholic Bishop of St. Paul had not been directly involved at any stage of the consultancy process,⁴²⁰ he had been informed of the proposed reorganization by trustees of the former Bonnyville S.D. #2665.⁴²¹ Since the reorganization enabled the creation of, what was in all but name, a Catholic separate school division, the cooperation of Church authorities was to be expected. To support the creation of the coterminous Catholic district the Bishop had a pastoral letter read in all the affected churches on Sunday 21 September. In it he

⁴¹⁹Statement by T. Turner, 24 September 1980, copy of statement in files of Lakeland R.C.S.S.D.#150.

⁴²⁰Correspondence, Bishop Roy to R. Iles, 10 January 1984.

⁴²¹C. Vincent, Interview.

noted his oft discussed desire for "the establishment of a Catholic Separate School District in your region." After referring to the reasons for Catholic schooling he then pointed out the "unique opportunity" that Catholic residents of the area now had before them. He proceeded:

Frequently, in the course of the history of our country, minority groups have had to struggle hard to establish their separate schools. For you, it is not a case of fighting for it; you need only to cooperate in establishing it.

The Bishop concluded by indicating that there would inevitably be "growing pains as you measure up to the great endeavour," but requested "openness of heart, with charity and a spirit of cooperation."⁴²²

With the support of the former Catholic Boards, their superintendent and public endorsement by their Bishop, the meeting of Catholic electors returned a vote of 515 in favour of forming a Roman Catholic separate district coterminous with the new public District #5460. Only seven electors voted against the formation of the new separate district.⁴²³ A total of 4200 Roman Catholic electors in the Beaver River S.D.#5460 had been entitled to vote.

On the following day, 25 September 1980, the Minister of Education established Lakeland R.C.S.S.D.#150.⁴²⁴ Dr. MacNeil was formally appointed Official Trustee of the new district. All assets and liabilities of the former Catholic districts were transferred from District #5460 to the new Separate District #150 as were fifty percent of the assets and liabilities of the former Bonnyville R.S.D.#4.

Some Legal Concerns

The Minister's use of Section 25 of the **School Act** ⁴²⁵ to dissolve separate school districts raised a number of legal questions of which Bonnyville trustees were aware at the time of reorganization. One former District #2665 trustee recalled informing the Minister that to dissolve separate school districts was beyond his powers. The Minister was reported as having indicated that he accepted that such action could be challenged.⁴²⁶

⁴²²Pastoral letter, Bishop R. Roy to the Roman Catholic people of Bonnyville, LaCorey, Fort Kent, Ardmore, Cold Lake, Grand Centre and Elizabeth Settlement, 15 September 1980.

⁴²³Voting documents and tally sheets are filed with Lakeland R.C.S.S.D.#150.

⁴²⁴At the same time Beaver River S.D.#5460 was renamed Lakeland S.D.#5460 because it had been discovered that another school district with the name Beaver River already existed in the County of St. Paul.

⁴²⁵**School Act** 1970, S 25. "The Minister may declare that any district or division be dissolved and thereupon the board is dissolved and ceases to have any of the rights, powers and privileges vested in it by this Act and the district or division ceases to exist."

⁴²⁶C. Vincent, Interview.

The Minister, therefore, appears to have taken careful steps to ensure support for his action. The strategy of requesting the participating Boards to pass the required resolution was designed to guarantee that none of the former Separate Boards would subsequently challenge his action pursuant to section 25. For it is arguable whether powers granted under this section extend to separate districts. Dr. Stringham, who had been chairman of the committee that drafted the 1970 **School Act**, thought not, whereas W. T. Worbets was prepared to allow the Minister this power over separate districts.

Several Department of Education administrators suggested to the researcher that the resolution passed by each of the Boards related to section 56 of the **School Act** 1970.⁴²⁷ However, it is difficult to accept such an interpretation. First, nowhere in the Ministerial Orders of 10 September, or the related correspondence, was there any indication that the resolution passed by the Separate Districts of Cold Lake and Grand Centre had application to section 56 of the **School Act**. Second, the discretionary power stated in the section seemingly relates not to the holding of a plebiscite, but to the means by which a plebiscite may be brought on. Rather, the requested resolution served as political protection for the Minister in his exercising of Section 25 in relation to separate boards.

In recommending that the Minister proceed under section 25, Worbets had support from two legal opinions which had been obtained earlier in relation to requests to clarify the legality of (a) the inclusion of Duclos P.S.S.D.#2 into the Bonnyville S. Div.#46, and (b) the several expansions of the boundaries of Duclos P.S.S.D.#2 and Bonnyville S.D.#2665. The details of the legal arguments are not of relevance at the present. But based on these, it was asserted that, "The Minister may dissolve a separate school district under Section 25 of the **School Act**."⁴²⁸ The author of the second legal opinion agreed. He wrote:

I concur with Mr. Morrison's view that section 25 of the **School Act** which provides for the dissolution of any district or division applies to both separate and public schools. After dissolution, section 50 of the **School Act** would be an available means by which a new separate school district may be established.

After referring to section 17(1) of the **Alberta Act** 1905, the author submitted that:

the basic right granted by the 1901 Ordinance is the right to separate school supporters

⁴²⁷**School Act** 1970, S56. "A board of a separate school district (a) may of its own volition, or (b) shall if twenty five percent of the electors of the separate school district petition to board to dissolve the district, conduct a plebiscite to determine whether the separate school district should be dissolved."

⁴²⁸Legal Opinion, B. P. Morrison, Solicitor (A. G. Dept.) to W. T. Worbets, 11 July 1979.

to establish separate schools and establish a "rates system" to support the school.⁴²⁹

Nevertheless, the definition of the powers available to a Minister of Education in Alberta in relation to separate school districts remains unclear as section 25 of the **School Act** 1970 has never been tested in the courts.

Aware that "few problems in Canadian education have caused so much heated controversy as the separate school situation," (Bergen, 1961:14) the Minister took care to consult with relevant interest groups and especially the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association. While ACSTA had some reservations concerning the use of Section 25,⁴³⁰ it had good reasons for agreeing to the reorganization because it created a precedent for Catholic jurisdictions coterminous with school divisions, something that the Association had long advocated. For example, in its 1974 **Brief to the Commission on School District Boundaries**, while recognizing the difficulties inherent in any immediate introduction of Catholic coterminous divisions, ACSTA had, nevertheless, referred to "the eventual acceptance and realization of the more ambitious and promising idea of coterminous boundaries."⁴³¹ Although the new Lakeland Districts were based on a single district structure, in practice they were akin to divisions.

In its acceptance of the reorganization, ACSTA was also mindful of the significant public input and the dialogue engaged in by Catholic leaders in the area through the consultancy process, together with the high measure of consensus that had been achieved.

A concern held by ACSTA leaders in relation to the reorganization was the abolition of the 4 x 4 district structure and the consequent removal of constitutional rights from that level to what amounted to a divisional level. Rather than using the 4 x 4 district structure as "building blocks" with which to create a divisional structure, the term "district" had been redefined to mean a very much larger area. Although in rural areas this term has traditionally referred to an area of approximately sixteen square miles, the **School Act** 1970 did not define it except to state that "any portion of Alberta" may be established as a public school district by the Minister.⁴³² The local Catholic consensus for reorganization, the very detailed planning of

⁴²⁹Legal Opinion, H. Kushner, Solicitor, to W. Henkel QC., assistant Deputy Attorney General, 5 July 1979.

⁴³⁰K. McKinney, Interview, 31 January 1984.

⁴³¹Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association, **Brief to the Commission on School District Boundaries**, 1 September 1974, p. 19.

⁴³²**School Act** 1970, S.14(1).

the implementation and the care taken to observe all relevant aspects of the **School Act** in implementing reorganization also helped to ensure support from ACSTA.⁴³³

Some Concerns of the Bonnyville Boards

As previously mentioned, each of the local boards approached the establishment of the new districts with a measure of hesitation. The Board of Division #46 was particularly aware of some of the inherent problems and their consequences that would have to be overcome in implementing reorganization. In a letter to the Minister, the superintendent stressed the need to maintain a "similar spirit of support, sincerity and cooperation demonstrated to date by all concerned."⁴³⁴ Four areas of concern were mentioned in the letter:

1. That the new districts be established "in a fair and just manner and in keeping with the aspirations of the numerous minority groups currently being served."
2. That the new public district was likely to experience considerable additional expenses and a simultaneous decline in revenue⁴³⁵ and may require special funding to offset such effects.
3. That to be successful, other Sage recommendations must be implemented alongside the district reorganization. These would require special front-end funding from the province.
4. That the Official Trustees retain current policy and regulations, draw on the experience and knowledge of the present Board and consult with trustees on establishment of wards or subdivisions.

The superintendent of District #2665, Cold Lake #64 and Grand Centre #67 was a little more enthusiastic than his public system counterpart. He wrote:

It is with great anticipation that the trustees await the creation of a Catholic school jurisdiction that will respond to the educational and spiritual needs of all Catholic students in our region.⁴³⁶

Nevertheless, he went on to comment that the "maintenance of linguistic and cultural preferences of the residents" had not been adequately addressed by the Sage Institute. In this regard funding for a new French school in Bonnyville was required. In addition, it was noted that the Minister could expect a request for funding for a Catholic high school to serve Cold Lake and Grand Centre and also for a central office complex.

⁴³³K. McKinney, Interview.

⁴³⁴Correspondence, G. Kuschminder to D. King, 9 September 1980.

⁴³⁵Due to loss of 300-400 resident students to the new Catholic district.

⁴³⁶Correspondence, M. Beaudoin to D. King, 8 September 1980.

Withdrawal by Medley S.D. #5092

Recommendation 13 part (e) provided for the inclusion of Medley S.D. #5029 into the new coterminous district structure. Although their representatives had participated throughout the consultancy process, very few of the problems that faced the surrounding jurisdictions affected Medley. It was suggested that:

their main motive was to be sure that they maintained a quality place for their high school kids to go to school. They had paid a lot of money to keep Grand Centre High School in operation and they were most anxious that nothing destroy the opportunity to a good high school education.⁴³⁷

Sage Institute interviewers found little interest among Medley residents to move out of their own school system.⁴³⁸

The Commander of Cold Lake Air Force Base officially replied to the Ministerial letter of 5 September that invited the District to request dissolution.⁴³⁹ He indicated that the effect of a population increase in the area would have a negligible effect on Medley and then quoted the **Sage Report** finding that "the general perception among Medley residents [is] that current arrangements are fully satisfactory."⁴⁴⁰ Therefore, on the basis of the first of the principles enunciated in the **Report**, i.e. "Decisions that are made should address the interests of children and families," he argued that Medley S.D. #5029 remain independent.⁴⁴¹

In addition, the Base Commander provided a "non-exhaustive list" of six further matters that would need to be addressed prior to the district joining with the new neighbouring districts. These included:

1. Base security: control of entry to the base must remain with the Department of National Defence.
2. The base had a federal government mandate "to provide French language, French immersion, and religious services wherever it is required, regardless of the total number of people concerned." Furthermore, its francophone school was "not tied to parents' religion" and was therefore more able "to promote understanding between Canada's founding people."
3. It was noted that expenditure per student was higher than the provincial average "to ensure the viability . . . of . . . programs and options which . . . would presumably not be

⁴³⁷B. L. Stringham, Interview.

⁴³⁸R. L. Holland, Interview.

⁴³⁹Correspondence, G. E. Younghusband to D. King, 17 September 1980.

⁴⁴⁰**Sage Report**, p. 56.

⁴⁴¹**Sage Report**, p. 56.

available in the proposed merged school." (Although not fully detailed in the letter, the expenditure comparison is noteworthy. In 1979, Medley spent \$2193 per pupil compared with an Alberta average of \$1955. However, the five local Boards averaged approximately \$1750. Medley had forecast an increase in per pupil expenditure to \$2603 per pupil in 1980.)

4. There were difficulties associated with transferring school buildings from federal to provincial inventory.
5. Significant labor-relations problems could be expected with the larger school districts due to the higher salaries paid to Medley teachers.
6. It was suggested that a smaller board was more receptive to the "turmoil and disruption" experienced by children of military personnel and more able to minimize possible disadvantage.

Finally, continued attendance by high school students at Grand Centre High School was assured. The Commander left open the possibility of joining the larger school district at a later date:

Although it may take some time to find mutually acceptable solutions to the problems we face in joining the amalgamated school districts, we would hope that the option of our joining at a later date would be kept open.⁴⁴²

The Minister replied stating that:

Your decision to remain as an autonomous district has been recognized and please be assured that the option to become part of the newly established school district at a later date will be kept open.⁴⁴³

There is no evidence to indicate that amalgamation has since been seriously addressed by either Medley or the Lakeland Districts.

Establishment of Assessment Base

As part of the reorganization, both of the new Districts were faced with the necessity of establishing how many electors and resident students belonged to their District. In addition, tax assessment rolls for each District had to be developed in conjunction with the eight municipal authorities that exist within the boundaries of Lakeland S.D.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴²G. E. Younghusband to D. King.

⁴⁴³Correspondence, D. King to G. E. Younghusband, 8 October 1980.

⁴⁴⁴The eight municipal authorities include Bonnyville Municipal Division, Town of Bonnyville, Town of Grand Centre, Town of Cold Lake, Village of Glendon, Summer Village of Bonnyville Beach, Summer Village of Pelican Narrows and Improvement District #18.

Whether property is assessable by the public or separate school district is determined in Alberta by the religion of the owner.⁴⁴⁵ The **School Act** places the onus on the separate district to submit to municipal authorities the "names and addresses of all electors whose property is liable to assessment and taxation for the support of the separate school district."⁴⁴⁶ Thus, Lakeland R.C.S.S.D.#150, with the use of records from the Roman Catholic churches, municipalities and long time residents of the area, was required to establish an electors' roll. Municipal authorities then informed those whose names were on the separate school list of this fact. Should a notified person not be of the Roman Catholic faith they could, within a twenty-one day period, return a signed declaration stating that, "I am not of the Roman Catholic faith", and that individual's name would be removed. Because of the important contribution local assessment makes to the total revenue of a school board, both of the Lakeland Boards sought to maximize their number of supporters.

Given the requirements of the **School Act** in the matter, it was to be expected that the Separate District would endeavour to place as many names as possible on their electors' roll leaving the responsibility on individual electors to return the declaration if they were not of the Roman Catholic faith. To protect its interests and endeavour to retain the support of Ukrainian Catholic electors, the Board of Lakeland S.D.#5460 authorized the issuing of an alternatively worded declaration to that provided by the municipal authorities. This read, "For the purpose of this declaration only, I am not of the Roman Catholic faith."⁴⁴⁷

However, the municipal authorities accepted the advice of the Deputy Minister of Education, who wrote to them in response to numerous inquiries that:

You are advised to accept only those declarations of faith that indicate that the property owner is not of the Roman Catholic faith. The School Act does not provide any condition relative to this matter.⁴⁴⁸

As a result of past conflict between the Ukrainian and francophone populations in the Bonnyville area, most Ukrainian Catholics had never sought to belong to a Catholic district but had, particularly in the Glendon, Iron River and Ardmore areas, been long standing supporters of Divisional schools. Many of these people resented being forced into the new Separate District which they viewed as being dominated by Bonnyville francophones. In addition, many

⁴⁴⁵School Act 1970, S.57(1).

⁴⁴⁶School Act 1970, S.57.

⁴⁴⁷Bonnyville Nouvelle, 22 December 1980, p. 1.

⁴⁴⁸Correspondence, E. K. Hawkesworth to Administrators of the Municipalities and Towns in the Bonnyville area, 19 December 1980.

drew a sharp distinction between the Roman Catholic and Ukrainain Catholic churches.⁴⁴⁹ Bishops Roy and Greschuk met with the Board of the new Separate District to deal with this issue at an official level.⁴⁵⁰ Not all Ukrainian Catholics, however, were prepared to accept the new situation with which they were confronted.

No such distinction is drawn in the **School Act** and so Ukrainian Catholics were faced with the requirement of signing the declatory statement if they wished to remain public school supporters. The action taken by Lakeland S.D.#5460 in response to pressure from Ukrainian Catholics was designed to "allow people of the Catholic faith to support the public board without having to renounce their religion."⁴⁵¹

It is difficult to establish the number of Catholic people who signed the declaration and remained public district supporters. A report in the **Bonnyville Nouvelle** quoted the Mayor of the Village of Glendon as saying that the majority of Catholics in Glendon were signing the declaration that they were not of the Catholic faith.⁴⁵² In the Lakeland District as a whole, one trustee agreed that perhaps ten percent of Catholics signed the declaration.⁴⁵³ Petition documents for the formation of Lakeland R.C.S.S.D. on file in the Department of Education indicate that the new school district had 4200 Roman Catholic electors and 6850 Protestant electors.

A second action taken by the Lakeland S.D.#5460 in relation to the establishment of assessment rolls was the circulation of a letter to corporate bodies to seek their support for the public District.⁴⁵⁴ This letter also raised controversy within the community. Both in its wording and its purpose it was far from clear. It implied that in "designating all or part of its allotment of assessment for separate school purposes," a corporation was in some way being at best unfair to the public District and at worst in violation of the **School Act**. Recipients were invited to review the relevant sections of the **School Act 1970** (S60-64). Although no particular course of action was advised, presumably the public District desired either the whole assessment or assessment allocation to be based on pupil ratios.

⁴⁴⁹**Bonnyville Nouvelle**, 30 December 1980, p. 1.

⁴⁵⁰M. Beaudoin to R. Iles.

⁴⁵¹**Bonnyville Nouvelle**, 9 December 1980, p. 1.

⁴⁵²**Bonnyville Nouvelle**, 22 December 1980.

⁴⁵³C. Vincent, Interview.

⁴⁵⁴Circular letter, G. Kuschminder to members of Boards of Directors, 9 December 1980.

Separate District trustees expressed anger and disappointment that the cooperation established during the consultancy process should be disappearing so quickly. The chairman of Lakeland R.C.S.S.D. #150 reportedly commented, "The purpose of the letters is to collect extra tax dollars they don't even know they will lose."⁴⁵⁵ Another trustee was quoted as saying, "I thought we would have good cooperation with the other board. Where do we go from here?"⁴⁵⁶

Provincial Assistance to the New Districts

Access to additional financial resources was, as has been previously discussed, a major motivation for the several Boards to accept reorganization. During the consultancy process area trustees had been verbally assured by both Department of Education officials and the Minister that additional support, including financial assistance, would be made available to the new districts. This was referred to by one Departmental administrator who commented on the understanding that existed between key local leaders and senior Department of Education administrators and spoke of a mutual commitment that transcended the written records - "a sharing that this thing is going to work."⁴⁵⁷

Only the major forms of provincial assistance to the new Lakeland Districts over and above that generally available to school jurisdictions in the province have been discussed.

At the organizational meeting held on the day following the dissolution of the former Boards, Dr. Odynak discussed with local administrators and former trustees the areas of additional assistance agreed to by the Minister. The assistance measures were designed to meet three criteria, (a) to provide both Districts with a sound financial base during the transition period, (b) to emphasise preventative measures, and (c) to recognize needs unique to the Bonnyville area. The supporting Ministerial letter outlined six areas of specific assistance.⁴⁵⁸

1. Special financial assistance over and above the Declining Enrolment Grant to the public District for the expected loss of 300-400 resident students to the separate system.
2. Two modifications to the school buildings funding plan to address concerns relating to "front-end" funding:
 - (a) accord each District a utilization factor of 1.0 until the first new school was built (i.e.,

⁴⁵⁵Bonnyville Nouvelle 22 December 1980, p. 1.

⁴⁵⁶Bonnyville Nouvelle, 22 December 1980, p. 1.

⁴⁵⁷W. R. Duke, Interview.

⁴⁵⁸Correspondence, D. King to Chairman, Lakeland S.D.#5460 and Lakeland R.C.S.S.D.#150, 12 November 1980.

the province would fund most of the cost of one new school for each District.)

(b) defer local repayment of debt charges on unsupported capital costs that exceed two mills until major assessment from the Esso plant were to be available.

3. Alberta Education to assume all additional administrative costs of reorganization.
4. Alberta Education to assist in satisfactory disposition of the Centralized High School building.
5. Additional personnel and funding assistance to be available to reorganize transport services on the understanding that one jurisdiction would assume legal responsibility for this function.
6. Lakeland R.C.S.S.D.#150 assured of "equitable financial adjustments" when it was to assume responsibility for the Elizabeth School and Metis Colony #9 on 31 December 1980.

The two page letter was carefully studied by both the new districts. The superintendent of the Separate District wrote a very detailed memorandum to that district's chairman raising a great many matters upon which further clarification should be sought.⁴⁵⁹ Following detailed discussion by his Board, the public District superintendent wrote a seven page letter to the Department of Education to seek further clarification and also recognition of the changed situation of his District.⁴⁶⁰

Both the Minister's letter that outlined the additional assistance being made available as well as the responses by the new Boards were based on the expectation that major economic development was about to occur in the region. The changed political and economic environment associated with the suspension of the Esso project at Cold Lake and the declining fortunes of the Alberta economy invalidated some of the premises on which the Minister's offer of assistance had been based. The various outcomes that resulted are discussed in Chapter Six.

The province also assisted the new Districts in the necessary reorganization of local tax assessment.

In recognition of the difficulties inherent in developing listings of assessable property, electors and resident pupils for both the new Districts, W. T. Worbets suggested that provincial assistance be offered:

The school authorities have to proceed on an individual basis to acquire this information in order to establish the property tax base and resident pupils for Education grant purposes. It is perceived that working in isolation may result in

⁴⁵⁹Memorandum, M. Beaudoin to C. Vincent, 5 December 1980.

⁴⁶⁰Correspondence, G. Kuschminder to E. A. Torgunrud, 8 December 1980.

unnecessary conflicts, misunderstandings and confusion. Therefore, it is recommended that Alberta Education undertake this task immediately at department expense.⁴⁶¹

Specifically, he suggested with Ministerial approval the appointment of an enumeration officer who would establish an office, recruit enumerators and generally coordinate the process.

The two Boards chose not to act upon this suggestion. According to a Separate District administrator, that Board preferred its own staff to compile the rolls in order to protect its interests.

We had to do it ourselves. Indeed we wanted to. We felt that the Ukrainian Catholic issue would be turned against our interests. Even though we agreed they would attend public schools, we wanted the assessment base.⁴⁶²

The Separate Board hired a person to compile the assessment rolls. These were then forwarded to the public Board to be checked. The latter Board did not specifically hire a person for this task. It therefore did not qualify for the \$12,000 provided by the Department of Education for such a purpose despite its protestation that the time of its staff had been given over to the checking of the rolls.⁴⁶³

A further area of provincial assistance and one that had been foreshadowed in the Minister's letter, 12 November 1980, related to transportation. Although transportation had not emerged as a major area of concern to many individuals during the Sage study, the educational history of this area suggested that it was, nevertheless, a potentially explosive issue that required careful planning. With this in mind, the two Lakeland jurisdictions accepted a provincial offer to fund a major transportation study in the area. This was undertaken by personnel from the County of Strathcona during 1981. The outcomes of the study are also discussed in Chapter Six.

D. Summary

A complex and interrelated set of factors were evident in the implementation process. At least, four major factors variously influenced the area Boards in their decisions to accept reorganization. For the Catholic Districts the major factor was undoubtedly the distribution of assessment revenue from the proposed Esso oil-sands plant. Also of importance in enabling reorganization to occur was the compliant attitude of Division #46 trustees, a change of

⁴⁶¹Memorandum, W. T. Worbets to S. N. Odynak, 7 October 1980.

⁴⁶²M. Beaudoin to R. Iles.

⁴⁶³Correspondence, C. Gault, Secretary-Treasurer, Lakeland S.D.#5460 to J. Clarke, Field Administrative Officer, 8 December 1981.

attitude by Dr. B. Brosseau, C. Vincent and other leaders of District #2665, and the emergence of an increased desire on the part of area trustees to seek a more cooperative approach to resolving educational conflicts in the area. Of lesser significance, but nevertheless important, was the supportive stance adopted toward reorganization by provincial interest groups, namely, the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta and the Alberta Catholic Schools Trustees' Association. Support from the Bishop of St. Paul was not a determining factor, but his opposition would probably have negated the whole project. The participatory decision-making process initiated by the Sage Institute not only helped ensure a broadly based acceptance by area trustees for its major recommendation, but also helped to generate a supportive community environment.

The Minister of Education desired to reorganize the complicated jurisdictional governance arrangements that had hindered the delivery of educational services in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area of Alberta. Given the broad consensus of opinion from area representatives on the Ministerial Advisory Committee and the approaching school board elections in the province slated for October 1980, the Minister determined to implement the recommended jurisdictional reorganization immediately. He feared that the existing consensus could have dissipated during the local election campaign.

Utilizing Section 25 of the *School Act* 1970, the Minister dissolved all the former jurisdictions in the area with the exception of Medley and established a single public school District. Also included from Northland S.D.#61 was the Elizabeth Metis Settlement. Two Official Trustees were appointed for public and Catholic electors respectively. To protect himself from possible legal challenge over his use of Section 25 of the *School Act*, the Minister obtained written support from each of the former Boards and the acquiescence of ACSTA. Subsequently, in response to a petition from Roman Catholic electors in the area, the Minister established a Roman Catholic Separate School District coterminous with the new public District.

As part of the negotiations undertaken at the time of reorganization, the Minister of Education gave assurances to both public and Catholic trustees that various forms of provincial government support would be forthcoming. Funding was provided to the Separate Districts to cover the costs of hiring a person to compile a roll of separate district electors. In addition, the Minister provided a package of operational assistance, a major purpose of which was to ensure

that both the new Districts could be established with a sound financial base.

The legally correct placement of Ukrainian Catholics in the Separate District created a considerable degree of community conflict and bitterness, especially in Bonnyville and Glendon.

VII. CONSEQUENCES

This chapter contains a description and analysis of some of the consequences that followed in the subsequent three and half years from the jurisdictional reorganization implemented in September 1980. These are based predominantly on data derived from the interviews of both past and present trustees and administrators. To a lesser extent, data from documentary sources have been utilized.

The six areas of conflict identified in Chapter Three-- religion, language and ethnicity, boundaries and transportation, local assessment revenue, Bonnyville Centralized High School, and intertown rivalry-- are each addressed in turn. The chapter concludes with a presentation of a number of more general administrative and organizational consequences identified by provincial administrators and public and Catholic district administrators and trustees.

Two additional introductory comments need to be made. The main purpose of the chapter is to present a range of perspectives from which an assessment as to the worth of reorganization may be made. The scope of the study requires that these be presented in a generalized form. There is no intention of it being an evaluation of either of the present Lakeland school jurisdictions. Second, although the researcher's perspective is to some extent evident in the selection of the data used in this chapter, the primary intention is to present consequences identified by trustees and administrators.

A. Religion

Conflict involving religion had largely centred on the demands of some Roman Catholic residents of Division #46 to have their children attend the Notre Dame schools of District #2665 in Bonnyville.

After reorganization all Catholic residents became electors of the new Separate School District. As a result, they gained the right to participate in the conduct of the Separate District and to send their children to a separate school. A trustee from LaCorey who formerly had been dependent upon Division #46 for having his children transported to Bonnyville and by law was unable to financially support District #2665, stated that he and his Catholic neighbours

. . . welcomed it because as Catholics [we] now . . . had the right to vote [in a Catholic system]; the right to send our taxes where we wanted; and the right to be elected [to

the Board] and [possess] equal opportunity.⁴⁶⁴

Reorganization also mitigated any need for Catholic parents in former Division #46 districts where they were the minority group to "have to form our own little separate district"⁴⁶⁵ and further fragment educational jurisdiction. Other trustees also referred to the right that all Catholic parents now have of sending their children to a Catholic school.⁴⁶⁶

However, in a large rural district like Lakeland, the right to attend a Catholic school sometimes cannot be exercised because of distance. With the exception of the Elizabeth school at Metis Settlement #9, all other Catholic schools in the Lakeland District are located in the three main towns. This location pattern leaves many of the rural areas, particularly in the east and north-east of the District, unserved by a Catholic school. While Catholic parents in these areas have a legal right to have their children bussed into Bonnyville, the time spent in daily travel makes too great a demand on the children concerned. The cost of such transport also requires consideration. These matters are further discussed later in this chapter in relation to "boundaries and transportation."

A number of public trustees regretted the establishment of two school systems in the Lakeland District. They argued that children should not be segregated into different schools on the basis of religion. Such separation, it was asserted, made it more difficult for rural areas to provide the fullest possible range of programs and reduced the potential development of tolerance and understanding. A former administrator of Division #46 claimed that:

Slowly as it might be [the area] was seeing eye to eye. We had built the regional high school despite the early difficulties. The students of both Catholic and Protestant families were attending the one school. There was school spirit. I think this [reorganization] has segregated our area and community.⁴⁶⁷

A trustee of former Division #46 said:

I still regret the . . . requirement that we have to have the separate school system . . . if we could only get together, we could withstand all this separate school business and run one school system . . . that would have been the wisest thing for us to do. It would have saved so many arguments, so much bitterness.⁴⁶⁸

Another trustee commented, "I really don't believe in the province's separate school system."⁴⁶⁹ A third trustee supported a similar position, "I don't believe in two systems, separate and public. It's a pure waste of taxpayers' money . . . You're duplicating all the

⁴⁶⁴J. C. Lajoie, Interview.

⁴⁶⁵J. C. Lajoie, Interview.

⁴⁶⁶C. Vincent, J. Coulombe, Interviews.

⁴⁶⁷S. Skuba, Interview.

⁴⁶⁸A. Edstrom, Interview.

⁴⁶⁹R. Piper, Interview.

services."⁴⁷⁰

However, these trustees had divergent viewpoints as to the place of religion in an all inclusive public school. One of these trustees stated,

I think that Catholicism, or Buddhism or Anglicanism or whatever should be taught after school. I don't think it should be the teacher's job to teach religion in school . . . the school is there to educate children, not to teach them religious studies.⁴⁷¹

But another trustee who favoured the inclusion of religion as part of the school program commented: " . . . within that one educational system we could offer to those students who wanted it whatever level of religious instruction they required."⁴⁷²

Contrasting with the above perceptions are those adopted by Lakeland Catholic Board of Education⁴⁷³ in their Mission Statement in which the school is viewed as:

. . . a Christian community, capable of providing a climate conducive to religious transformation, encouraging students to express and celebrate their religious convictions openly (in a manner that unites thinking with feeling).

The mandate of the school is stated as being:

. . . to teach children to appreciate, evaluate and celebrate the religious significance and implications of [human] knowledge and practice and witness to it for the betterment of mankind.⁴⁷⁴

The fulfilment of such an aim ideally requires that specifically Christian teaching and values permeate every aspect of school life. Clearly the provision of courses in religious education is only one means by which such aims are pursued. The ethos of the school, the attitudes and values that are espoused by teachers and administrators and the interrelation demonstrated between secular and religious knowledge also ought to characterize the Catholic school.

The Mission Statement adopted by Lakeland Catholic Board contrasts starkly with the policy of the Board of Lakeland S.D. #5460 which has virtually excluded all religious activity from its schools. The local newspaper has been critical of this policy and has suggested the introduction of courses in comparative religion and ethics and values.⁴⁷⁵ The apparent division among trustees of District #5460 concerning the place of religion in a public school system reflects division within the non-Catholic community in regard to the issue.

⁴⁷⁰H. Thalesvar, Interview.

⁴⁷¹R. Piper, Interview.

⁴⁷²A. Edstrom, Interview.

⁴⁷³As from 1 March 1981, Lakeland RCSSD #150 changed its corporate name to Lakeland Catholic Board of Education as per **School Act 1970, S.30(7)**.

⁴⁷⁴"A Proposed Mission Statement for the Lakeland Catholic Board of Education," *The Good News in Education*, supplement to *Bonnyville Nouvelle* 23 August 1983.

⁴⁷⁵*Bonnyville Nouvelle* 15 November 1983.

Reorganization was successful in giving to all Catholic parents in the Lakeland School District the legal right for their children to attend a Catholic school. However, bussing distances and resultant costs limit the practice of this right. For most pupils, reference to religion is almost non-existent in the public District schools except for special provision for Roman Catholic religious instruction, such as that provided at Fort Kent.

The formation of a coterminous Roman Catholic separate jurisdiction in the Lakeland School District greatly reduced conflict over access to Catholic education. However, because of legal provisions that compel all Roman Catholic residents in the area to be electors of the Separate District, new sources of potential conflict emerged. These had more to do with language and ethnicity than religion and are discussed in the next section.

B. Language and Ethnicity

Reorganization addressed most of the conflicts that resulted from denying francophone electors of Division #46 access to French language education. The overwhelming majority of the francophone population were also Roman Catholic in their religious beliefs; therefore, as members of the new Separate District after reorganization, those in the Bonnyville area were able to attend the Notre Dame schools. Francophone children in the Therien area attend school at Mallaig under a tuition agreement between the Catholic Board and the County of St. Paul.

It was more difficult for the Separate District to provide for the smaller number of francophones and other Catholics wanting French language classes in Cold Lake and Grand Centre and those in isolated areas of such a large district. In the Cold Lake and Grand Centre areas the old Division #46 problem of sufficient class size surfaced. The limited interest in French language education in the eastern part of the District is illustrated by the attendance of only fifteen persons at a recent meeting in Grand Centre arranged by the Catholic Board to discuss the provision of French language classes.⁴⁷⁶

As noted earlier, those in isolated areas are disadvantaged by factors of both cost and time required for travel. A trustee of former Division #46 commented that some of the problems the Division had to face are now confronting the Catholic Board:

... the other Board is unable to do any differently than we did. They're not moving. No way are they able to provide immersion French and religious instruction for handfulls of individuals here and there. It's not viable. It can't be done.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁶Bonnyville Nouvelle, 7 February 1984.

⁴⁷⁷A. Edstrom, Interview.

But although the problem of access to French language education still exists in a small way within the Separate District, it certainly no longer creates the political turmoil that it previously generated between Division #46 and some of its francophone electors.

While the connection between religion and language has been generally advantageous to the francophone population, it has been disadvantageous to those of the non-Catholic population who desire French immersion classes for their children. While Bonnyville S.D.#2665 existed as a public district, non-Catholic children could attend the Notre Dame schools and be exempt from Catholic religious education classes. However, as a separate district, Lakeland Catholic Board has adopted a policy that requires all students to attend religious education classes.⁴⁷⁸

This policy presents little real difficulty for students from other Christian denominations, but it does present a major problem for people of non-Christian faiths. For this reason, Lakeland S.D.#5460 had been under pressure from a small number of its electors to introduce French immersion courses. At present, however, there is an inadequate number of prospective students in either Bonnyville or Grand Centre to ensure that an immersion program remains viable over a period of years. The present population of the area cannot seemingly support quality French immersion programs in both public and separate schools. Accordingly, the **Bonnyville Nouvelle** has editorialized:

If the economics of French immersion are shaky, there is no reason the Lakeland Public School District should duplicate the services of Lakeland Catholic Board of Education. However, if it is in a monopoly situation, the Catholic Board should consider relaxing its religion instruction policy for non-Catholic students.⁴⁷⁹

As was noted in an earlier chapter, one reason cited by the Official Trustee of Medley S.D.#5092 for that District remaining independent was that provision of French language education would be too closely tied to matters of religion. To develop national tolerance and understanding Medley S.D. provides bilingual education for children of military personnel without reference to religious affiliations.⁴⁸⁰ For this reason, a small number of public District pupils attend Medley S.D.#5092 schools for French immersion classes.

Within the Catholic system there is a desire on the part of some francophones for an entirely French school. This was referred to by former superintendent Beaudoin in his letter to

⁴⁷⁸C. Vincent, Interview; L. Remillard, Interview, 26 January 1984.

⁴⁷⁹**Bonnyville Nouvelle**, 22 November 1983, p. 4.

⁴⁸⁰Tien to King.

the Minister indicating District #2665's support for reorganization.⁴⁸¹ The matter is also of concern to present trustees. One spoke of a possible future scenario in Bonnyville whereby grades eight to twelve would be included in a new 500 pupil high school and the present Notre Dame elementary and junior high schools be converted into a grade one to seven French (including immersion) and English schools respectively. He commented:

Some say this will create a division in the community. It should satisfy those who think there is too much French now and the French speaking think right now that to have a good efficient French program when two thirds of the kids are English dilutes your program a bit.⁴⁸²

Reorganization was successful in alleviating conflict over access to French language instruction between Division #46 and some of its electors. As was anticipated by Divisional trustees at the time, under the proposed reorganization many of these problems have been transferred to the Catholic Board which has had to assume responsibility for adequate provision of French language services. Some public trustees consider that language will become an increasingly difficult problem within the Separate District. For example, one former Lakeland #5460 trustee alluded to the dominant francophone presence in the leadership of the Catholic Board. He commented:

. . . some of these people [non-francophone Catholics] will not fully support the Catholic system. They view Bonnyville Catholic Board as being French-Catholic and for that reason somehow or other do not feel part of it . . . I think what's going to happen though is that it [the establishing of a francophone elementary school] is going to really shake some of these people who are non-French and Catholic to [see] the true nature of the Catholic Board. Right now there is a feeling that when you build that so-called French school, I think you're going to see a further alienation.⁴⁸³

On the other hand, increased acceptance of multiculturalism and intermarriage between Catholics of different ethnic origins are lessening the significance of past antagonism among ethnic groups. One trustee of Lakeland Catholic Board of Education spoke of the development in time of new loyalties to a common Catholic school system.⁴⁸⁴ Meanwhile ethnic and linguistic differences within the Catholic system remain and continue to require prudent leadership. As was suggested by a former Official Trustee, perhaps a sign of the maturing of the Lakeland Catholic District will be the readiness of francophone leaders to accept the appointment of a non-francophone superintendent or assistant superintendent.⁴⁸⁵ Although denied by both its administrators and trustees, at present the District appears to be dominated by francophones. A

⁴⁸¹Beaudoin to King.

⁴⁸²C. Vincent, Interview.

⁴⁸³A. Ryll, Interview.

⁴⁸⁴J. C. Lajoie, Interview.

⁴⁸⁵H. A. MacNeil, Interview.

public District administrator expressed a widely held view that to "an outsider looking at the politics of the Separate School District, it is dominated by the French-Catholic cultural group."⁴⁸⁶ The chairman of the Board, the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, and most of the central office staff are French-Catholic.

As indicated by several public District trustees and administrators, reorganization may have transferred conflict over language into the Separate District.⁴⁸⁷ Although one Catholic trustee referred to the development of a multicultural Separate District⁴⁸⁸ the fulfilment of such a goal is, in the opinion of some of its non-francophone electors, still in the future.

C. Boundaries and Transportation

Disputes over school district boundaries, which largely had their origin in demands by francophone and other Catholic residents of Division #46 to have their children attend Notre Dame schools of Bonnyville S.D. #2665, virtually disappeared when the area was reorganized as a single school district with coterminous jurisdictions. The differing internal school attendance boundaries of the two Lakeland Districts have, however, proven to be a major source of difficulty. The superintendent of District #5460 noted that this was a major problem. He explained that the public system has a policy of directing its students to the nearest school, both to lower transport costs and to maintain enrolments in its rural schools at Iron River, Glendon, Fort Kent and Ardmore. Due to the absence of rural schools in the Catholic District, public District parents who wish their children to attend school in Bonnyville rather than in a rural area and who are refused transport by District #5460 because of its attendance area policies may approach the Catholic Board of Education. Because of the latter's open door policy, these students are admitted to Notre Dame schools in Bonnyville and provided with transport by the Separate District. In such an event, the public District not only loses students together with the revenue from their parents' taxes, but also supports the transport costs incurred because under the joint transportation agreement the public District pays sixty percent of all costs. Therefore, the Board of District #5460 is forced to accept additional transport costs by transporting such students to its Bonnyville schools or suffer the greater cost entailed in the loss of its pupils to the Notre Dame schools. One former public

⁴⁸⁶G. Kiernan, Interview.

⁴⁸⁷W. Hayduk, A. Ryll, A. Edstrom, Interview.

⁴⁸⁸J. C. Lajoie, Interview.

trustee claimed that this was a cause of major inefficiency in the new transportation system.⁴⁸⁹

Transportation policy is administered by a joint committee which employs its own transport manager. Many trustees and administrators agreed that operationally the bussing system has been significantly improved following reorganization and the 1981 transportation study conducted for the two Boards by the County of Strathcona. However, as indicated above, decisions as to which children are transported remain with the parent Boards.

Because the possibility exists for numbers of Catholic pupils to require transport over long distances (e.g. Glendon to Bonnyville), the present flat percentage allocation of provincially unsupported transportation costs between the two Boards (forty percent and sixty percent) is of concern to the public Board. For this reason there has been some discussion as to the possibility of moving to a formula reflecting per student/kilometre distances.⁴⁹⁰ Clearly, not all transportation problems have been solved. As one District #5460 administrator indicated in reference to transportation, "whatever problems reorganization solved, it created equal difficulties"⁴⁹¹

The division of Lakeland S.D. at the time of reorganization into two wards for electoral purposes was, and in some rural areas continues to be, a matter of contention within both the public and Catholic systems. Public supporters in the rural areas resented loss of the sub-divisional system formerly used by Division #46. These residents felt they would be dominated by the urban areas, especially Bonnyville. A former administrator of Division #46 commented that there is a feeling among rural people that "we lost a local school representative."⁴⁹² He claimed that rural residents considered it was easier to bring concerns to the attention of the known local representative who would, if necessary, refer them to the full Board.

A former trustee of both Division #46 and Lakeland #5460 similarly stated:

There is still a fair amount of unhappiness with the two wards versus the old subdivisions when you talk to people in the rural areas. They are not happy. They [formerly] knew who their Board member was; most people knew them; they knew who to contact if they had a problem . . .⁴⁹³

The two ward electoral system in which the School District is divided by a north-south

⁴⁸⁹A. Ryll, Interview.

⁴⁹⁰C. Vincent, Interview.

⁴⁹¹W. Hayduk, Interview.

⁴⁹²S. Skuba, Interview.

⁴⁹³A. Ryll, Interview.

line approximately a kilometre east of Ardmore was recommended in the **Sage Report**.⁴⁹⁴ After considerable discussion a two ward electorate was accepted by the former trustees of Division #46 and District #2665.⁴⁹⁵ Although the two Lakeland Districts could have adopted different electoral systems, it was convenient that at least for the initial trustee election in November 1980 they be the same. Subsequently, neither Board has sought to change this arrangement.

Some public District personnel suggested that the two ward system was necessary to ensure strong francophone representation in the new Catholic system and that this was a condition required for acceptance of reorganization by District #2665.⁴⁹⁶ Certainly, the francophones of former District #2665 would not likely have accepted a reorganization which gave them less than equal representation in the new Catholic district.

The two ward system met the representation criticisms that members of the A-Quest group in Grand Centre and Cold Lake had previously levelled at the Division's sub-divisional electoral system. One former A-Quest member in speaking about the reorganization commented, "Yes, we were very pleased because it definitely gave us [the two eastern communities of Grand Centre and Cold Lake] more representation . . ."⁴⁹⁷

Representation of the Glendon area has been a problem for both Boards, especially the Catholic board. Fears held by public District electors in Glendon at the time of reorganization were not borne out in practice. In commenting on the two ward recommendation of the Sage Institute, one of the Official Trustees stated:

. . . there were considerable strains in there. One group of people that were very perturbed were the people from the west end of the area around Glendon [who] feared that they would be out-voted in a block that would include Bonnyville . . . and they wouldn't have representation. It was a fear that wasn't actually justified but it existed.⁴⁹⁸

A Glendon representative was elected to the public Board in the November 1980, partly because many local people plucked⁴⁹⁹ their votes by voting for only two candidates rather than for four candidates as they were entitled to thereby reducing the total number of votes for candidates from other areas.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁴**Sage Report**, Recommendation 13(m).

⁴⁹⁵H. A. MacNeil, R. M. Ward, Interviews.

⁴⁹⁶W. Hayduk, S. Skuba, A. Ryll, Interviews.

⁴⁹⁷H. Thaleshvar, Interview.

⁴⁹⁸R. M. Ward, Interview.

⁴⁹⁹To deny votes to candidates in an election by voting for fewer candidates than the number of positions available thereby increasing the chances of preferred candidates to be elected.

⁵⁰⁰R. M. Ward, Interview.

The situation for Glendon area electors of the Catholic Board is more difficult. Because of the large concentration of francophones in Bonnyville and the surrounding area, there is very little likelihood of a Ukrainian Catholic from the Glendon area being elected to the Catholic Board. The chairman of the Catholic Board has suggested the creation of a one member ward in the Glendon area to provide those electors with a local representative at Board level. This would increase the Board size to the legal maximum of nine trustees. He stated:

I would like to see a third ward in the west. These people seem to be left out of our district at this time. Even though one of them would run over there, he has a very small chance of being elected. I would like to see a smaller ward in the west where they have one trustee who at least can communicate what is going on . . . They would feel part of the district. Right now I think they feel isolated.⁵⁰¹

It would seemingly require magnanimity on the part of the present trustees to alter the 50-50 east-west balance.

Despite the jurisdictional reorganization and the subsequent restructuring of the transportation system in the Lakeland School District, the potential still exists for conflict over the allocation of costs. In addition, difficulties over attendance and electoral boundaries may still affect relations between and within the two school jurisdictions.

D. Local Assessment Revenues

The equitable distribution of assessment within the boundaries of District #2665 was the cause of considerable frustration on the part of Divisional personnel prior to reorganization. As noted in the previous chapter, the initial development of assessment rolls for the two Lakeland jurisdictions resulted in a degree of ill-feeling as both Districts strove to maximize their potential local assessment. However, the provision of funding by the provincial government for the appointment of an enumeration officer immediately after the formation of the new districts forestalled greater conflict, although during December 1980 assessment was "the red hot potato politically."⁵⁰²

The effect of reorganization on the generation of local tax assessment revenues is perceived somewhat differently among the local educational leaders. One former trustee stated:

. . . we [Division #46] lost a lot of revenue in the rural areas. However, we gained in the town of Bonnyville . . . I think overall it's much the same . . . [District] #2665 really was the district that lost. Oh, definitely they were the people that really lost.

This speaker indicated that District #2665 lost because following reorganization it was no

⁵⁰¹C. Vincent, Interview.

⁵⁰²R. M. Ward, Interview.

longer the public system in Bonnyville.

The chairman of Lakeland Catholic Board of Education considered that, although the loss of tax dollars in Bonnyville was felt in his District, to a large degree the loss was balanced by the additional revenue gained in rural areas. District #5460 administrators agreed with this view.⁵⁰³ According to figures supplied by the Secretary-Treasurer of the Catholic Board, the tax base within the boundaries of District #2665 fell from fifty-five percent to forty-seven percent. Overall the new Catholic District has thirty-five to thirty-six percent of the tax base. Should some of the pilot oil projects presently underway be upgraded, to a larger level of production the District will stand to further improve its local assessment revenue. The Secretary-Treasurer appears to be quite correct when he maintained that the new Board is financially far better off than were the five former Catholic Districts of the area.

Due to inflation, changed assessment rates and a measure of economic growth in the area, total assessment amounts increased greatly although detailed dollar comparisons are beyond the scope of this study. The Secretary-Treasurer of Lakeland S.D. #5460 indicated that the District "benefitted dollarwise in our taxes" despite the loss of approximately 350 resident students. Most of these students still attend public schools and consequently the District gains tuition payments from the Catholic Board. It was claimed that implementation of the tuition agreement served to offset any loss of revenue resulting from reorganization.⁵⁰⁴

Although the necessity of a tuition agreement was recognized at the time of reorganization, it took over three years to reach formal agreement.⁵⁰⁵ During these three years an annual settlement was reached. Because approximately 100 public students attend Catholic schools, the Catholic system presently pays tuition to the public District for about 225 students. In 1983-84 the payment was \$972 per student.

The amount of this tuition payment is of concern to the Catholic Board. According to the Secretary-Treasurer, the Board accepts the need to pay tuition for its students who attend Glendon High School. However, serious concern was expressed by both administrators and trustees of the Catholic Board about the situation in Grand Centre and Cold Lake. The Secretary-Treasurer stated:

We have a high school at Cold Lake -- a very small high school. The public Board has

⁵⁰³C. Gault, G. Kiernan, Interviews.

⁵⁰⁴C. Gault, Interview.

⁵⁰⁵A formal tuition agreement was signed by both Lakeland Boards in December 1983.

a very large and nice high school in Grand Centre. A lot of our students who attend [the public high school] . . . should really be attending St. Dominic's school. But because it's very small [and] the programs are not there they are attending Grand Centre. Our Board is wondering, if in the long term interest of Catholic education it's best to keep paying tuition for those students who attend.⁵⁰⁶

In addition, approximately forty Catholic students presently attend the new Nelson Heights public school in Cold Lake which is offering the same program as St. Dominic's.⁵⁰⁷ Faced with increasingly high tuition payments, the Catholic Board is examining its open school policy that allows parents the freedom to send their children to a public school with the Board automatically committed to paying tuition.

But there are considerable political difficulties inherent at the local level in changing this open policy. One trustee pointed out the concern that, if too pressured, some nominal Catholic supporters may change their taxes to the public system.⁵⁰⁸ This would result in a loss not only of individual assessment and resident pupils but also a lowering of corporate revenue, the allocation of which is largely based on the number of resident students in each District.⁵⁰⁹ The problem that formerly confronted Duclos P.S.S.D.#2 would then confront Lakeland Catholic Board, namely, if ratepayers say they are no longer Catholic it is difficult for the Board to prove otherwise.

Without the adoption of an open school admission policy by the Catholic Board, its conflicts with many former Division #46 Catholic electors would have been much greater following reorganization and would almost certainly have resulted in a higher number of Catholics declaring in favour of District #5460. Indeed, the Official Trustee of the Catholic District warned that no attempt should be made during the first five years after reorganization to enforce attendance at Catholic schools by refusing to pay tuition for students attending public schools.⁵¹⁰

Although a tuition agreement has been signed, the issue of which students will qualify for tuition payments is likely to become increasingly complex. Such decisions will continue to be bound in a web of delicate political, economic and legal considerations. This difficulty has been intensified by the cancellation of the Esso mega-project and the non-occurrence of the previously anticipated rapid population growth in the area. Both Boards can expect a steady

⁵⁰⁶G. Burge, Interview, 24 November 1983.

⁵⁰⁷C. Gault, Interview.

⁵⁰⁸J. Coulombe, Interview.

⁵⁰⁹School Act 1980, Section 70.

⁵¹⁰H. A. MacNeil, Interview.

growth of assessment revenues from smaller scale oil development presently occurring. Because the percentage of revenues derived from provincial sources has been declining over recent years, local revenues assume greater significance. In this environment the possibilities for conflict between the two Lakeland jurisdictions appear to be increased. One Catholic trustee expressed his concern over the matter of enrolments and, by implication, finances in the following terms:

. . . [P]olitically it's important, [and] educationally it is also very important that the two systems continue to have very good relationships at all levels. But that's not going to be easy. It was easier up to now than it is going to be from now on. At a point in time when systems are suffering from lack of enrolments, you have to go out and get enrolments. It's hard to be always diplomatic and subtle about it.⁵¹¹

Reorganization has altered rather than resolved conflict over assessment revenues. The exercise of choice by parents as to the schooling of their children is constrained in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area by a complex mesh of legal, political, religious, linguistic and ethnic factors over which individuals have little direct control.

E. Bonnyville Centralized High School

Since its foundation, the joint operation of Bonnyville Centralized High School had been the source of periodic difficulties between Division #46 and District #2665. One of the understandings agreed to at the time of the reorganization was that Bonnyville Centralized High School would be replaced by two high schools, one operated by the Catholic District and the other by the public District.⁵¹² Population projections in 1980 had indicated that by 1983 when the schools were to be available, student numbers would justify two high schools in Bonnyville. Although not detailed in the *Sage Report*, an understanding existed between local leaders and senior administrators in the Department of Education that the building of two high schools would be facilitated.⁵¹³ This would enable the Catholic population of Bonnyville to fulfil a long held desire to establish their own high school with the cultural and religious milieu they considered appropriate.

With the cancellation of the Esso project, the two high school scenario appeared much less likely. In addition, the economic recession and an over supply of pupil places in Alberta caused the Department of Education to adopt a more stringent attitude toward building expansion.⁵¹⁴ Therefore, the concept of a tri-campus arrangement for secondary and

⁵¹¹J. C. Lajoie, Interview.

⁵¹²C. Vincent, G. Kiernan, Interviews.

⁵¹³W. R. Duke, C. Vincent, Interviews.

⁵¹⁴W. R. Duke, Interview.

post-secondary education in Bonnyville was given serious consideration and strongly promoted by local MLA, E. Isley. This would have involved the two school Districts and Lakeland College locating on a common site one kilometre south of the Bonnyville townsite. Facilities requiring large capital investment (e.g. vocational education workshops, cafeteria) could be shared. Late in 1983, however, the Department of Advanced Education indicated that it was unable to fund the proposed building for Lakeland College in Bonnyville. Consequently, early in 1984 the tri-campus plan was reduced to a bi-campus proposal.

Throughout the negotiations the Catholic Board has been the major actor. In addition to a long standing desire to have a Catholic high school, it now has serious overcrowding in the District's elementary and junior high schools in Bonnyville. However, the Board argues that a decision regarding the future of high school education in the town must precede decisions concerned with remedying overcrowding in the other schools.

Recently, the Catholic Board indicated that it wanted a Catholic high school by September 1985.⁵¹⁵ The Board has stated that a bi-campus arrangement with the public Board is its first preference. Should the bi-campus concept not eventuate, it is prepared to buy out the public District share in Bonnyville Centralized High School and operate it as a Catholic high school. In the absence of a cooperatively based solution, the Catholic Board is prepared to unilaterally build its own high school.⁵¹⁶

In a letter dated 9 February 1984, the Catholic Board officially notified the public District of its intent to dissolve the present agreement to jointly operate Bonnyville Centralized High School. Under the terms of the agreement eighteen month's notice of withdrawal is required. Dissolution of the present agreement and the establishment of a Catholic high school in Bonnyville was a major policy of several successful candidates in the October 1983 trustee elections.⁵¹⁷

Unlike the Catholic Board, the Board of District #5460 has, for the most part, adopted a reactive stance in the ongoing debate over the future of the Centralized High School. Because of its heavy interest and loan repayment commitments that will claim an estimated eighteen percent of its 1984 budget, the public District is not in a financial position to embark upon the construction of a high school in Bonnyville. Although the District returned a surplus

⁵¹⁵Bonnyville Nouvelle, 7 February 1984, p. 1.

⁵¹⁶Bonnyville Nouvelle, 17 April 1984, p. 2.

⁵¹⁷Bonnyville Nouvelle, 27 September 1984.

of \$31,000 in 1983, it expects a deficit of \$445,000 in 1984.⁵¹⁸

There appears to be strong opposition in the public Board to building a new high school in Bonnyville at present. One trustee commented:

There is no way that I would want a new high school put in Bonnyville due to the economic situation, the decrease of program offerings and the number of public students that presently exist.⁵¹⁹

This view was reflected in the announcement by the public Board at a joint meeting of the two Boards in February 1984 that it is "committed to the continued joint operation of the Bonnyville Centralized High School for a minimum of five more years effective September 1984."⁵²⁰

The public District has announced a series of guidelines for future negotiations with its Catholic counterpart over the future of Bonnyville Centralized High School. These state that any reorganization of the provision of high school education in the town must not result in (1) extra portables being attached to H. E. Bourgoïn or Duclos schools, (2) elementary students being bussed across town to either H. E. Bourgoïn or Duclos schools, (3) Bonnyville students being placed at out-of-town schools (e.g. Fort Kent), and (4) elementary or high school students losing any programming options.⁵²¹ In these guidelines the reactive stance of the public Board is clearly evident.

These negotiation guidelines adopted by the public Board were in response to the establishment of a task force by the Department of Education for the purpose of resolving the future of the Centralized High School. The task force, headed by Dr. W. R. Duke and including both Lakeland Superintendents as well as Departmental resource persons, was formed as a result of discussions involving the Minister of Education, the Minister of Advanced Education and the Bonnyville MLA, E. Isley in February 1984.⁵²²

Although the future organization of high school education in Bonnyville remains unresolved at the time of writing, the desire of both the provincial authorities and local personnel to endeavour to reach a cooperative solution is evident. Trustees from both Districts have expressed such views.⁵²³

⁵¹⁸Bonnyville Nouvelle, 13 March 1984, p. 2; 27 March 1984, p. 3.

⁵¹⁹R. Piper, Interview.

⁵²⁰Bonnyville Nouvelle, 7 February 1984, p. 1.

⁵²¹Bonnyville Nouvelle, 13 March 1984, p. 1.

⁵²²Bonnyville Nouvelle, 21 February 1984, p. 1.

⁵²³J. Coulombe, R. Piper, H. Thaleshvar, C. Vincent, J. C. Lajoie, Interviews.

In consequence of the economic decline since reorganization, Dr. Duke has indicated the changed basis for Departmental assistance for the establishment of a Catholic high school as agreed at the time of reorganization:

Some provision will take place. Now whether or not it's the modernization of one of the existing school there or whether it's some other alternative, the matter has to be looked at in the light of, and everybody agrees with this principle, and that is, we have to look after the welfare of both Districts. In other words, we can't bankrupt the public District by leaving them with a 500 place high school and only 240 kids in it. Already their capital indebtedness is extremely severe. . . if either local Board ends up causing pain to the other one, what you will find is the Department will be protecting by whatever avenues it has, the best interests of the party that is being put in a situation that's not in its best interests. That automatically moves from the cooperative mode which has existed and as far as I know continues to exist.⁵²⁴

Whatever reorganization of high school education in Bonnyville is adopted and whether cooperatively or unilaterally, additional problems will arise. The bi-campus solution is likely to place severe financial strains on the public District and is premised on satisfactory disposal of the present Centralized High School. Although the Minister of Education undertook to assist in its disposal in 1980 at the time of reorganization,⁵²⁵ the suspension of the Esso project and recession in the local economy have greatly limited possible alternate uses of the present high school. The purchase of the public District's share in the present high school is dependent upon the agreement of District #5460 which has already indicated its commitment to the joint operation of the high school for at least the next five years. In addition, the conversion of the Centralized High School to a Catholic high school would leave the public District with accommodation difficulties and result in a possible loss of taxes and students to the Catholic system. Unilateral action by the Catholic Board to establish its own high school would leave the public District with a large and costly high school complex which it could not afford to purchase or operate. Failure by the Boards to reach agreement on a satisfactory purchase price by the public District could lead to the Catholic Board seeking redress through the courts. Such action would certainly undermine present and future cooperation between the two Districts.⁵²⁶

Public trustees and administrators tended to emphasise in interviews the effect that separation into two small high schools will have on the availability of program options for students in both schools. Department of Education officials were particularly aware of the program limitations of small high schools. However, the francophone Catholic trustees had a

⁵²⁴W. R. Duke, Interview.

⁵²⁵D. King to Chairman, Lakeland S.D.#5460, Lakeland R.C.S.S.D.#150, 12 November 1980.

⁵²⁶J. Coulombe, Interview.

different perspective. They emphasised the cultural and religious value of a Catholic high school which it was proposed would provide for students of grades eight to twelve. Such an arrangement would allow for the establishment of a grade one to seven French and bilingual school in either the present elementary or junior high school.⁵²⁷ As well, a Catholic high school in Bonnyville would also have a heavy emphasis on French language and culture. Indeed, an advertisement, written entirely in French, calling for a public meeting to explore the possibilities of a French high school appeared in the local paper in January 1984.⁵²⁸

Although the Bonnyville Centralized High School had a very difficult birth in the early 1970's and has been the subject of controversy at various times since, it has, nevertheless, operated successfully for most of its existence. It is ironic that, at a time when it is operating very successfully,⁵²⁹ its demise appears imminent in the interest of broader political, cultural and religious objectives.

The establishment of two high schools was negotiated in the reorganization process as the most acceptable means of resolving controversy that had surrounded the governance of the school, especially in regard to matters of religion, French and student discipline policy. This strategy had been premised on continued growth in the population of the Bonnyville area. With the cancellation of the Esso project and recession in the economy the dual high school proposal seemed less feasible. But because a Catholic high school in Bonnyville is tied in with other development plans, the Catholic Board has continued to pursue this goal. It now appears that Bonnyville Centralized High School will cease to exist within two years.⁵³⁰ While this may end the conflict that has been associated with the governance of the school for most of its existence, it will certainly not end conflict related to the provision of high school education in Bonnyville.

F. Inter-town Rivalry

Reorganization has had little effect, nor could it have been expected to, on long-standing and deeply rooted intertown rivalry in the area. This rivalry is a concern to both Lakeland Boards although its emphasis is different for each and trustees have differing perspectives on this matter. There is competition between east and west in both Districts as well as potential for an escalation of that competition. In the public District there is also the rivalry

⁵²⁷J. C. Lajoie, C. Vincent, Interviews.

⁵²⁸*Bonnyville Nouvelle*, 24 January 1984, p. 3.

⁵²⁹G. Kiernan, L. Remillard, Interviews.

⁵³⁰G. Kiernan, Interview.

among the smaller centres of Glendon, Iron River, Fort Kent and Ardmore and between them and Bonnyville. Within the Catholic District there is the potential for intertown rivalry to be intensified by francophone and non-francophone divisions.

A number of comments by local trustees and administrators from both Districts serve to illustrate these statements. It was apparent that some were more willing to mention divisions within the other District than in their own. A former trustee of Division #46 and Lakeland #5460 said:

I think that in District #5460 we had a problem with east-west. I think a lot of that has been overcome. It has taken a lot of time. I think it crops up occasionally but not in the way it was at one time. But I know . . . talking to some of the [Catholic] trustees for this area [Bonnyville] they feel that those people [Cold Lake and Grand Centre] are dragging them down. The schools need a lot of repairs. They never looked after their situation and they have to do it for them. The reverse is also true. They [Cold Lake and Grand Centre] felt that these people [Bonnyville francophones] are running the show only because they were the largest system to start with . . . Another problem they have . . . Basically the people in Grand Centre and Cold Lake are Catholic but not French Catholic. Here it is French Catholic . . . Some of the Catholic trustees in the town of Bonnyville . . . find what was added on [to District #2665] just a drag.⁵³¹

The former District #2665 and present Catholic District trustee suggested:

The public Board has a tendency of having an east-west split which our Board doesn't. I think the east has taken the attitude that we are treating them fairly. Why should they pull for the east because they know very well we're subsidising them.⁵³²

A administrator of District #5460 stated:

I know they [the Catholic Board] are not running as smoothly as they expected they would run. There are some difficulties on that Board . . . I think there has been a lot of tension . . . between the east and the west may be more so than in the few years after reorganization.⁵³³

Other trustees and administrators from both Districts cautiously admitted that divisions do exist. Some considered the east-west division to be significant, particularly for the public Board. A former Division #46 administrator commented:

I definitely feel within the Board of the public system there is polarization. There are the eastern trustees and western trustees.⁵³⁴

A present public District trustee stated:

Yes, I do. To be honest, I really do [think there is an east-west split among the trustees on the public Board]. The split was there but it [the tendency for east end trustees to deal with east end problems and vice versa] is only making it more difficult.⁵³⁵

⁵³¹A. Ryll, Interview.

⁵³²C. Vincent, Interview.

⁵³³W. Hayduk, Interview.

⁵³⁴S. Skuba, Interview.

⁵³⁵R. Piper, Interview.

A present public District trustee and former A-Quest member said:

I wouldn't say it's [east-west division on the public Board] a serious problem. But on the other hand, I don't think we can deny it either. Your responsibility is to the people who have elected you . . . and when you're there to represent your people you are going to speak up as strongly as you can. And sometimes that may come out as east-west.⁵³⁶

Others referred to the intertown rivalry that continues to exist between Cold Lake and Grand Centre and which must be taken into account by both Boards in their decisions that concern these towns. A Catholic District trustee stated, "You know there is always that rivalry between any two organizations, two towns. This is unfortunately the case."⁵³⁷

A former Division #46 chairman remarked:

Most of the people who were very upset in years past are no longer active in school affairs. They're elderly now and don't have any direct involvement . . . Of course the loss of the high school [from Cold Lake] is not the only area of bitterness between the two towns . . . Cold Lake is an old town. Grand Centre sprang up really after the advent of the military base. As a result many of the services which were in this town slipped away to the newer, faster growing town. There's a lot of bitterness in many areas; the school is one in particular.⁵³⁸

As inter-town rivalry takes place in a larger arena than that of school affairs, it is not to be expected the jurisdictional reorganization would have lessened such rivalry. Previously, at least the Catholic systems in the three main towns could act independently when they chose even if sometimes to the educational disadvantage of pupils. Now as part of a single jurisdiction, management of intertown rivalries cannot be avoided even though it may cause a temporary increase in conflict. Intertown conflict may be intensified with the Catholic Board due to cultural and linguistic differences.

Within the public District, the east-west conflict remains although the changed pattern of representation has probably served to focus the conflict more within the Board than between the Board and dissatisfied east end electors as was previously the case. Although reorganization led to a more appropriate level of representation for these electors than they had in Division #46 it, nevertheless, increased at least the potential for a greater level of east-west conflict within the Board of the public District. For example, one trustee wrote to the researcher that she and other east ward trustees receive comments from the electorate regarding the centralization of the District's administrative office and maintenance facilities in Bonnyville. Electors have indicated:

⁵³⁶H. Thaleshtar, Interview.

⁵³⁷J. Coulombe, Interview.

⁵³⁸A. Edstrom, Interview.

. . . that some structure should be in either Grand Centre or Cold Lake as they are large enough communities; they feel there is not only an alienation factor, but also a corporate assessment factor that they are losing out on in the town(s).⁵³⁹

Although reorganization has reduced the problems of conflict and non-cooperation that existed between the former independent Boards, the issues of inter-town rivalry remain. These issues are probably now focused within the Boards of the two District partially because area differences have been institutionalized by the two ward electoral structure each has retained since reorganization.

G. Administrative and Organizational Consequences

In this final section of the chapter a selection of more general administrative and organizational comments by both provincial administrators and local personnel are presented. As is evident from the extracts given, individuals differed in the criteria by which they judged the worth of the reorganization. Generally, provincial administrators and Catholic District personnel commented more favourably than did those persons associated with the public District. Comments by senior provincial administrators, public and Catholic District trustees and administrators are presented.

Provincial Administrators

The chairman of the Ministerial Advisory Committee summed up the reorganization in the following terms:

I evaluate the whole project as a good one. It worked. That doesn't mean it's going to solve all the problems. But it solved the major jurisdictional problems. All the little petty differences will still be there . . . there is that little bit of disagreement between the Ukrainians and the French. But . . . intermarriage, tolerance, understanding . . . will come about . . . Before we used to receive a lot of mail from that area. In the last three years there's the odd question that comes up . . . this whole year I can't recollect the Minister getting a letter [of complaint] from the Bonnyville area.⁵⁴⁰

This speaker sought to minimize the significance of the potential for conflict between francophones and Ukrainians within the Catholic District. However, intermarriage may tend towards further assimilation into the anglophone culture which may in turn provoke more determined measures to protect francophone culture. Such reaction could lead to more rather than less conflict between ethnic groups within the Catholic District.

⁵³⁹Correspondence, R. Piper to R. Iles, 22 May 1984.

⁵⁴⁰S. N. Odynak, Interview.

A second senior provincial administrator also had a very positive assessment of the reorganization. He noted that the rational, studied approach to problems ranked "as one of the better exercises" in which the Department of Education had participated, partly because there had been involvement by "a strong local [board] component . . . a provincial and . . . a public component."⁵⁴¹ He continued:

Had not the economy changed and certain patterns changed, the story would have a much more positive assessment at this time. A number of the decisions at the time were based on a growth philosophy and [if that had] materialized, some of the problems would have resolved themselves, [e.g.] the building of additional schools and, generally speaking, the upgrading of educational opportunities for the Catholic community and the Protestant community . . . But the numbers did not materialize and so what we have, to some degree, is a plan for development that cannot be operationalized in the circumstances that prevail.⁵⁴²

But despite the fact that the anticipated economic growth did not occur, this administrator remained confident about the future of the reorganized Lakeland Districts. He accepted that the ground rules had changed somewhat but viewed the non-materialization of growth as causing only "a pause in terms of some of the initiatives that flowed from the [reorganization] plan."⁵⁴³

He further explained his positive assessment of the reorganization in the following terms:

In retrospect, I see no other solution that would have taken the resolution of the problem as far as it has. Now the concerns are at a different level of problem . . . [Although] the locals might feel differently . . . From what I see, I don't think they could go back. And having said that, what it really says is that there were some good decisions made. Everybody associated with the initiative will state, I am sure, that it was not optimal and we haven't optimized [since]. What was driving us was moving to something at the optimal level as compared to satisficing. I think we are around the satisficing level which is still better than where they were when they started, because the potential for problem resolution is now much better, i.e. economics of scale and other factors associated with governance. But they're there. And really, the biggest single factor to contribute to going down the optimal road would be growth.⁵⁴⁴

The same administrator was also particularly concerned with the fragmentation of school jurisdictions in Alberta and saw the Bonnyville situation as an opportunity to address the issue. "One of the larger considerations in my mind was this whole question of how do we grapple with the issue of fragmentation in this province."⁵⁴⁵ He assessed the reorganization as providing a prototype for dealing with issues of governance in other areas of the province. The broader base of a larger unit permits differential response to needs and therefore the building of a more comprehensive system. On the other hand, the speaker recognized that initially amalgamation of Districts did result in some disillusionment on the part of those who lost the

⁵⁴¹W. R. Duke, Interview.

⁵⁴²W. R. Duke, Interview.

⁵⁴³W. R. Duke, Interview.

⁵⁴⁴W. R. Duke, Interview.

⁵⁴⁵W. R. Duke, Interview.

power and authority they had previously possessed in a smaller system.

A third provincial administrator and member of the Ministerial Advisory Committee assessed reorganization as successful although also with some qualification. He acknowledged that there were "mop up hurdles" such as the distribution of assessment, the future of Bonnyville Centralized High School and the strained relationships between francophones and Ukrainians in the Catholic system.⁵⁴⁶ He also indicated that "things quietened down" in the Bonnyville area as a result of reorganization.

Public District Personnel

A former superintendent of the public District also assessed the reorganization as worthwhile.⁵⁴⁷ He commented that it "had to be done" because formerly "it was a bull's nest as far as governance in the area was concerned." He indicated that in the longer term the reorganization of jurisdictions is "probably a workable solution" although "not fool proof".

Another former superintendent of Division #46 had a less sanguine assessment of the outcomes of reorganization. He expressed grave forebodings if Lakeland is to be considered as a model for other areas of Alberta. He stated:

I think there are a lot of difficulties in what has been done if you look at the strained relations that it has created in the area. Those have to be factors . . . It has split us [the community] along the lines of religion . . . I think we have come a long way to assimilating this area. Now I have a fear that we are getting further apart. I'm not saying we are not getting along . . . [But] I think this has segregated our area and community; something that will take years, if ever, to revert to the situation where we were meeting on an equal basis.⁵⁴⁸

This former local administrator indicated that the ward system had resulted in a loss of local school representation and had been partly responsible for polarizing the public Board into eastern and western groupings. He doubted if bussing had really been made more efficient and viewed the planned formation of Catholic high schools in the District as retrograde. He added:

I don't know how you measure effectiveness. If effectiveness is to be measured by a reduced number of complaints to the Minister [then] I suppose in some people's minds you have done a great thing. I think we have gone in a retrograde step that will take years to overcome the polarization of Board members and I think there is a definite segregation of students.⁵⁴⁹

A present administrator of Lakeland #5460 stated that the Lakeland model could have applicability as a prototype for other areas but indicated a number of necessary conditions. He

⁵⁴⁶E.A. Torgunrud, Interview.

⁵⁴⁷G. Kuschminder, Interview.

⁵⁴⁸S. Skuba, Interview.

⁵⁴⁹S. Skuba, Interview.

elaborated:

In those areas where a separate school does not exist, I think the population has to be given an option as to which school system they support. In Lakeland, the Minister, by decree, dissolved a wide variety of school jurisdictions. The [Catholic] people of Bonnyville S.Div. #46 were never given a choice. The normal procedure is if separate [Catholic] school supporters wish to establish a separate school District there is a procedure through which they go to determine whether or not there is support for that . . . That step was totally ignored within the school Division . . . Nobody asked in any direct way for input from the [Catholic] people in Ardmore, Fort Kent, Iron River or Glendon.⁵⁵⁰

This administrator commented that reorganization had a more dramatic effect on the former Separate School Districts than on the Division. However, he pointed out that, although both Lakeland Districts have experienced a growth in revenue, that of the Catholic District has been greater. Indeed he maintained that, due to economic development in former Division areas, a lot of the revenue that is now split between the two Districts would have gone to the public District and "the public school District would not be in the financial situation it is now. We would be significantly better off."⁵⁵¹

Notwithstanding the foregoing comments, this administrator stated that the two Districts are now engaged in more joint operations than before and he attributed the impetus for this to the reorganization. He went on:

The fact that it has worked is the result of the personalities as opposed to any establishment of any provincial doctrine or organizational structure. The structure was put in place by the government, but it's the people who are here that make it work.⁵⁵²

However, he too has concerns about future relationships between the two Districts . . .

The previous animosities . . . have not gone away, they are just under the surface. If we get into a dissolution of Bonnyville Centralized High School, they won't be under the surface any more. This community will be very vocal.⁵⁵³

Another local administrator in the public District suggested that, apart from possibly transportation, the reorganization solved nothing. Educational programs were not improved and, although facilities were increased, the effect has been to increase the District's per capita costs. In his opinion, the new ward structure serves to intensify polarization of eastern and western trustees on the public Board. He too indicated that without reorganization the public District "would have been far better off . . . because the increased assessment would have made it [the public system] a whole lot more viable operation."⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵⁰G. Kiernan, Interview.

⁵⁵¹G. Kiernan, Interview.

⁵⁵²G. Kiernan, Interview.

⁵⁵³G. Kiernan, Interview.

⁵⁵⁴W. Hayduk, Interview.

A former chairman of Division #46 had a very different perspective on the outcomes of reorganization. Although he regretted the need for a separate school system, he stated:

Yes, I think generally it was a good move. I would feel if one had a chance to re-think it and re-do it all over again, likely we would end up close to the same place. I think it was may be the only solution that we could see at that time. I don't see that there could have been a better way today.⁵⁵⁵

A former public trustee who had been the Divisional representative on the Ministerial Advisory Committee did not agree. He claimed:

I think if people knew then what they now know, this whole thing would never have happened. And I think that may be the reason why this sort of thing hasn't happened in other areas. It really hasn't solved too many problems but it's created others. I'm thinking more of the Catholic Board. We in District #5460 operate much the same way as we used to except perhaps in transportation where we have to consult with somebody else whereas we didn't have to before. We no longer have our sub-divisions but wards; some people are not happy with that, other people are quite happy with it. But it has created other problems and in particular for the Catholic Board.⁵⁵⁶

Catholic District Personnel

As a group, Catholic District trustees and administrators were in agreement as to the benefits that reorganization had for them. While they agreed that it also brought difficulties, they were generally reticent to publicly detail these. As one of them expressed it when asked about differences of opinion between the francophone trustees of Ward One and the non-francophone trustees of Ward Two:

We may sometimes, it's part of human nature, be prone toward pulling for our own. But that's got to be natural. You must not let that be known or seen.⁵⁵⁷

The reorganization had a number of positive outcomes for the Catholic community. These were identified by the chairman of the Catholic Board as: (a) the right of all Catholics in the area to attend a Catholic school, (b) the increased assessment base for the Catholic District over what had been available to the former independent Catholic Districts, and (c) the possibility of building a Catholic high school in both the Bonnyville and the Cold Lake/Grand Centre areas.⁵⁵⁸ He recognized that difficulties had arisen for his Board. The new District inherited schools in Cold Lake and Grand Centre that required significant upgrading both in terms of facilities and teaching staff. The inclusion, unwillingly in many cases, of a large number of non-francophone Catholics in the Glendon, Iron River and Ardmore areas into the

⁵⁵⁵A. Edstrom, Interview.

⁵⁵⁶A. Ryll, Interview.

⁵⁵⁷J. Coulombe, Interview.

⁵⁵⁸C. Vincent, Interview.

new Catholic District was a source of difficulty, especially in terms of the impact it has on tuition payments to the public District. These payments are a source of concern as illustrated by the following comment:

The major thing right now that I see is tuition. We have to have a different tuition agreement or else we have to subtly try to get our Catholic pupils back to their Catholic schools.⁵⁵⁹

The present open attendance policy necessary to appease Ukrainian Catholic feeling makes this latter objective more difficult. Also, the revenue consequences that could result from a backlash in response to too direct attempts to get children of Catholic ratepayers into their separate schools, requires that the Catholic Board proceed cautiously.

The chairman also referred to the time required for former Division supporters to develop new loyalties to the Catholic District and the somewhat diminished influence of local priests over educational affairs in the smaller centres. He noted problems resulting from the view of some electors, with which he disagreed, that the District is too dominated by francophone Catholics. Finally, he indicated that plans for a new Catholic high school in Cold Lake/Grand Centre area have had to be shelved due to non-materialization of large scale economic growth. Meanwhile, a decision to upgrade high school facilities at St. Dominic's in Cold Lake has been taken.

Very similar perspectives on the outcomes of reorganization were also expressed by another francophone trustee of the Catholic District.⁵⁶⁰ Like other Catholic trustees he also stressed the fact that Catholic trustees, despite their differences, think and act as a board to a greater degree than he could observe in the public District.

A Grand Centre Catholic trustee also assessed reorganization positively.⁵⁶¹ He referred to the larger corporate tax base that Grand Centre Catholics had anticipated at the time of reorganization and the administrative advantages in being able to move teachers between schools within the larger system. He mentioned two particular disadvantages of reorganization: the loss of autonomy in the smaller Catholic communities of Grand Centre and Cold Lake, and the tuition payments required to meet the desires of Ukrainian Catholics in the Glendon and Iron River area, together with the effect this had on other aspects of District policy. Reorganization, he acknowledged, required that trustees who were used to thinking in terms of

⁵⁵⁹C. Vincent, Interview.

⁵⁶⁰J. C. Lajoie, Interview.

⁵⁶¹J. Coulombe, Interview.

one school and one community are now required to think in terms of a much wider and more diverse system.

A very different picture was drawn by a former Cold Lake and Lakeland trustee. He indicated that many Cold Lake Catholic people "feel they have been badly let down" following reorganization.⁵⁶² He expressed disappointment that the Catholic Education Centre which includes the District administrative offices was built in Bonnyville rather than at some point between the two major population centres. This has resulted, he claimed, in a "loss of contact" with school affairs. Resentment was indicated that some Cold Lake Catholics felt their hand had been forced at the time of reorganization. They considered they had little real option of staying out of the larger Catholic system.

Finally, the Catholic trustee from the Elizabeth Metis Settlement expressed very positive views concerning the Settlement's inclusion into Lakeland R.C.S.S.D.#150.⁵⁶³ She referred to the advantages in having the Settlement school administered from Bonnyville rather than from Peace River by Northlands S.D.#61. The distinctively Christian attitudes and perspectives that have been incorporated into the program were cited as a major outcome of inclusion into the Catholic Board. In addition, she claimed that through their participation in the school blessing ceremony, "the children consider the school a little more special now."⁵⁶⁴ Attitudes toward the school in the wider community have also changed for the better. These are reflected in greater parent participation in the school and improved student attendance and grades. Curriculum standards have been improved, and Cree language and cultural studies have been introduced. A prize-winning student dance troupe has also assisted in increasing student pride in Metis heritage and culture. Frequent contact with the school District psychologist, curriculum experts, the Secretary-Treasurer, the Superintendent and his Deputy have been welcomed in the Settlement.

Nevertheless, some difficulties remain. School materials and rental fees which had previously been paid by Northland School Division now have to be paid by parents. While a two year change over period was agreed to by the Catholic District, the payment of such costs at a time of economic difficulty has not been easy for some families. A second major concern, although not directly attributable to reorganization, is the time required for grades seven to

⁵⁶²L. Bujold, Interview, 4 November 1983.

⁵⁶³P. Collins, Interview 23 November 1983.

⁵⁶⁴P. Collins, Interview.

twelve students to travel daily to St.Dominic's School in Cold Lake. Often this precludes desirable participation in extra curricular sporting and cultural activities.

In general, the inclusion of Elizabeth Metis Settlement into Lakeland Catholic District is judged by the Metis community to have been very successful.

H. Summary

Largely because of the cancellation of the Esso project and the economic recession of the past few years, positive outcomes of the 1980 reorganization of jurisdictions in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area have been recognized as less than expected. Many aspects of reorganization were premised on an economic growth philosophy, and when this did not ensue, matters that may have been easily settled became more problematic. The best example of this relates to the provision of high school education in Bonnyville where the process of dissolving the Centralized High School in favour of a Catholic and a public high school has been protracted and difficult. At the eastern end of the District the Catholic Board has problems retaining students in their schools because without growth and the change it creates, the Board has been unable, to date, to alter community perceptions about the quality of the schools.

Both the joint transportation policy and the tuition agreement will also continue to be areas of potential, if not actual dispute between the two Boards. The equitable allocation of transport costs will seemingly continue to be of concern to the public District. As the Catholic District attempts to maximize enrolments in its schools, transport costs inevitably will rise.

A related, potentially serious source of difficulty between the Districts concerns the effect of the present open door policy of the Catholic Board, particularly when this policy is used by public electors to circumvent public District attendance boundaries. The transport of the children of these public electors, whether to attend public or Catholic schools, increases the cost of transportation.

The Catholic Board has clearly indicated its concern at the large amount it presently pays to the public District in tuition payments. Although an agreed formula is contained in the tuition agreement, the Catholic Board can be expected to utilize a range of means to endeavour to lower the number of its students attending public schools. However, the available means are in practice limited by the politics of francophone-Ukrainian relations and by the possibility of

nominal Catholics transferring their taxes to the public District. Given the present legal and financial restraints pursuant to school attendance in Alberta, continuing tension can be expected between the desires of each District to maximize enrolments and as a consequence maximize local and provincial funding, and the political and philosophical views of parents who may not want to have their religion determine the school to which they send their children.

Finally, it would appear that because of reorganization, long-standing inter-jurisdictional conflict over the desire and right of parents to have their children educated in a particular linguistic and religious milieu, has given way to conflict generated by attempts to maximize student enrolments and consequently maximize both program availability and local and provincial revenue. In addition, both the increased size of the two Districts and their two ward electoral structure has institutionalized pre-existent conflict between the eastern and western areas of both Districts. This may be a larger problem for the public District although the conflict may be just as prevalent in the Catholic District, but possibly better managed at the Board level.

VIII. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT FINDINGS

This chapter contains findings from the study concerning the substantive issues of conflict and its management. These are reported and discussed. Some reference is made to selected theoretical literature, especially to the work of Brown (1983).

A. Introduction

The assumptions inherent in the naturalistic research orientation of the study preclude any attempt in this chapter to formulate law-like theoretical propositions to provide operational prescriptions or rigid guidelines that might be applied in other situations. Rather, the purpose here is to discuss emergent findings from the study in relation to selected conflict management literature so as to promote greater contextually relevant understanding of education-related conflict and its management. The uniqueness of each administrative situation and its environment requires that the reader must ultimately assess the degree to which administrative practices which were applied in relation to the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area might be applicable elsewhere.

B. A Conceptual Framework

Dye (1978:39) has suggested six criteria for evaluating the usefulness of models in the field of policy analysis. These he listed as an ability to order and simplify; an ability to identify problem issues; a congruence with reality; an ability to communicate meaningfully; a potential for directing inquiry and research; and a capacity for suggesting an explanation of complex behaviour. Brown's (1983:19-22) conceptual framework for analysing conflict at organizational interfaces appears to fulfil these six criteria and has therefore been used to organize a number of findings from this study.

The framework is based on the observation that "continued interactions between interdependent social units produce interfaces that are social units themselves" (Brown, 1983:19). Interfaces are defined by Brown (1983:1) as "the meeting grounds where social units come face to face and parties interact." They may be analysed in terms of four elements: (1) the interface itself, (2) the parties to that interface, (3) the party representatives, and (4) the

larger context. The dynamic interplay of events at the interface is conceived as having both short term and long term aspects. The latter are defined by Brown (1983:21) as the "interplay of parties, interface context, and interaction outcomes that alter interface definition and organization." Short term aspects relate to the "interaction of representatives' perceptions, communications, and actions within the interface."

Brown refers to conflict management as the choice to intervene at an organizational interface to either promote or reduce the level of conflict. This requires alteration in the short term dynamics of representative interaction (change in perceptions, communications and actions) and/or the longer term dynamics of interface development (change in characteristics of parties, the external context and organizational structure of the interface). The decision to intervene to alter the level of conflict is always dependent "on the specific circumstances and values of intervenors" (Brown, 1983:79). An appropriate level of conflict produces bargaining and problem-solving behaviour between parties. Too much conflict results in escalation while too little, it is suggested causes suppression and withdrawal responses.

In his framework, Brown (1983:54) describes four general categories of conflict management intervention: (1) interventions that redirect immediate behaviour, (2) interventions that reallocate relevant resources, (3) interventions that reframe perspectives on the conflict, and (4) interventions that realign structural forces that underlie the situation. A wide range of specific tactics may be used in each category.

Using Brown's framework, the findings of the study are discussed under three headings, (1) the analysis of the conflict situation, (2) the intervention, and (3) the effects of intervention.

C. Analysis of the Conflict Situation

In this section education-related conflict in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area is analysed under the sub-headings: (1) interface elements and (2) interaction dynamics.

Interface Elements

Four elements were identified in the Bonnyville conflict situation. First, there were the major parties to the conflict, namely, the various school jurisdictions and especially Bonnyville S.Div.#46 and Bonnyville S.D.#2665. While all jurisdictions had similar responsibilities and

objectives relating to the delivery of educational services, each had its own special interests that were often perceived to be antagonistic by those in other jurisdictions. The interests of District #2665 personnel in providing francophone-Catholic education for all who desired it, including those residing outside its boundaries, were considered antipathetic to those of Division #46 whose interests revolved around maintaining enrolments in its rural schools so as to maximize program availability and revenues.

On the other hand, these two jurisdictions had a complementary interest in their joint operation of Bonnyville Centralized High School as neither could provide the same quality of high school education acting alone. In Cold Lake and Grand Centre the Separate Districts had their particular interests, some of which were similar or complementary. On other issues they were in conflict with each other and with the two Bonnyville jurisdictions. Generally, similar, complementary and conflicting interests were perceived by both administrators and trustees of each of the area jurisdictions. Clearly, the mix of interests was complex and changed over time.

In addition to the primary jurisdictional conflict, at a secondary level conflict existed between Division #46 and individual electors. Such conflict usually centred on the transportation of electors' children to District #2665 schools and may be treated as a manifestation of the wider conflict between the two Bonnyville jurisdictions.

The individual leaders and representatives of the school jurisdictions constituted a second element. The local administrators and trustees, who in the terminology of organizational theory performed functions of organizational boundary spanning, were required to exercise skills in negotiation, political tactics and informal influence. The study provides some evidence to show the significance of the attitude and value perspectives that individuals brought to this role. In the late 1960's and the early 1970's not only were interorganizational relations affected by the particular divergent interests of each jurisdiction but also by the hostility that key boundary spanners from both District #2665 and Division #46 had toward each other.

A third element was the situation of "competitive interdependence" (Brown, 1983:218) that confronted both Bonnyville Boards. Despite the conflicting nature of some of their interests, they were compelled to interact on a variety of matters because of their common geographical location and common provincially mandated responsibilities. Cooperation was forced on occasions by Ministerial and Department of Education dictates, for example in aspects of transportation and in relation to Bonnyville Centralized High School. Such interaction

was not only influenced by the respective interests of both parties, but by a past history of suspicion and hostility, and by the various ad hoc interventions of the Department of Education.

Intervention by Departmental personnel and the application of Departmental regulations often served to complicate rather than resolve conflicts. Sometimes intervention lessened conflict in the short term only to create increased long term problems. Difficulties over transport, Bonnyville Centralized High School and the application of inflexible funding regulations are examples where provincial level intervention produced long term difficulties.

Geography and religion forced Cold Lake and Grand Centre Separate Districts to recognize a measure of interdependence although the desire of each to protect its autonomy and identity limited the extent of cooperation.

The fourth element present in the Bonnyville situation pertained to the wider environmental context within which jurisdictional interaction occurred. The area's complex and diverse economic, political, linguistic, cultural and religious milieu manifestly had a significant impact on education. For example, attempts to induce the two Bonnyville jurisdictions to expand their level of interdependence often appeared to flounder either on the desire of the francophone community to retain its linguistic and cultural distinctiveness or on the political necessity for Divisional trustees not to be seen to yield to francophone pressure. In an environment of increasing complexity and uncertainty, partly produced by escalating economic development, the francophone community saw control of education as a major means of limiting its vulnerability to community disruption, loss of autonomy and assimilation into the increasingly dominant anglophone culture of the area. At various times and for a variety of reasons all area Boards exhibited suspicion and antagonism toward the Department of Education.

Interaction Dynamics

Interaction between the two Bonnyville jurisdictions, at least on occasions, may be best described using Brown's (1983:222) term of "organizational warfare." In this situation "organization representatives found it difficult to talk to each other without fighting, and so communications declined between periodic wars at the bargaining table" (Brown, 1983:222). At other times considerable cooperation was in evidence. Contrary to what Brown argues,

however, the conflictual relations between the two Bonnyville jurisdictions also produced periods of interorganization isolation and so they avoided "interaction that would produce disagreement, and reduce[d] engagement that would help them recognize and manage common problems" (Brown, 1983:223).

Where joint action was thought desirable it was, nevertheless, subject to considerable bargaining between jurisdictions. Examples include the bargaining between Division #46 and Cold Lake and Grand Centre Separate Boards immediately prior to the construction of Grand Centre High School and the agreement eventually reached between the Division and District #2665 to jointly build and operate Bonnyville Centralized High School. Differences between the parties were recognized but communication was guarded and selective because bargaining was viewed by the jurisdictions as a form of zero sum game in which one's gain is perceived as the other's loss. However, the conflict that ultimately induced the Minister to act was, to a large extent, between Division #46 and some of its francophone electors. Thus, intraorganizational as much as interorganizational conflict was significant. As suggested earlier, the both forms of conflict were interrelated.

In Brown's terminology, both the dynamics of representatives' interaction and of the organizational interface tended to promote conflict. Perceptions of and therefore also communication with other representatives were distorted. As a result actions of the two Bonnyville Boards were often mutually antipathetic. In addition, the legal and administrative organization of the jurisdictions tended to cause further escalation of conflict. These often acted as hinderances to attempts to engage in contained bargaining and problem solving behaviour that may have enabled conflict to be more positively managed.

D. The Intervention

The overall strategy adopted by the Minister was largely based on consultation. Obviously, he took advantage of a situation in which all parties appeared to have much to lose financially by allowing the prevailing situation to remain. Each faced an uncertain and difficult future in providing for the increased student numbers that would result from the expected economic growth in the area. The Minister sought to use the concerns of the jurisdictions over their access to oil plant revenues as a means of gaining the cooperation that would enable him to also address some of the long term educational problems of the area, namely, the

fragmentation of jurisdictions and the conflicts over access to francophone and Catholic education.

A consultative strategy was initially evidenced by the Ministerial offer to appoint an Advisory Committee composed of both Departmental and local jurisdictional representatives. Despite their misgivings, the area Boards agreed to participate for the reasons noted in the previous paragraph. The consultative strategy initiated by the Minister was furthered by the Committee in its decision to hire the Sage Institute, with its participatory Sage Analysis process, to act as external consultant to the Committee.

As was discussed in Chapter Five, the procedures used in Sage Analysis enabled a wide range of local opinion to be gathered and presented to the Committee in a usable format. The local representatives, operating from an agreed mission statement, were enabled to arrive at a mutually agreed resolution of the area's jurisdictional problems.

Other factors of significance in establishing an agreed basis for jurisdictional reorganization were: (1) the Minister's implied threat to act unilaterally if agreement was not forthcoming; (2) the leadership of experienced Departmental administrators; (3) the personal relationships established between Committee members and the goodwill exhibited by key local representatives; (4) the attitudinal change exhibited by Dr. B. Brosseau; (5) the disinclination of Bonnyville S.Div.#46 trustees to fight to retain any financial advantage that might have accrued to them as a result of economic growth; (6) the timing of implementation in relation to the provincial school board elections of October 1980; (7) the support of Catholic church authorities and ACSTA; (8) the informal commitments made by the Minister and senior Departmental administrators to financially ensure the success of reorganization; (9) the very limited public debate that occurred between the formal release of the **Sage Report** and the implementation of its major recommendation (e.g. if the implications of reorganization for Ukrainian Catholics and the change to a two ward electoral system in Divisional areas had been more widely understood, reorganization may have been more problematic); and (10) the retirement from the local educational scene of individuals who had been closely associated with past conflict.

In summary, the consultancy process occurred within a planned operation structure (the Ministerial Advisory Committee). Working sessions were purposefully scheduled and productive. The consultancy environment was non-threatening to local representatives who had

significant input into, if not control of, the directions taken by the Committee. In addition, economic self-interest and governmental commitments of support assisted local Board representatives to promote reorganization. Finally, timing was important. Committee deliberations were unhurried, but once intervention to reorganize the jurisdictions had been decided, the Minister and his Department acted expeditiously.

Classification of the intervention in terms of some of the existing typologies of conflict management strategies is difficult and suggests the inadequacy of adopting an either/or perspective in relation to strategy implementation in complex conflict situations.

The intervention might appear to correspond to Derr's (1980:265) collaborative strategy, but some elements of the same author's bargaining and power strategies were also evident. Neither can the intervention be easily placed within Thomas' (1976:900) two dimensional model in which the desire to satisfy one's own concern is related to the desire to satisfy the other parties' concerns. None of the five categories which he labels as competitive, accommodative, sharing, collaborative and avoidance can be easily applied. For, though at first the collaborative category appears to fit, Thomas' definition of this term as pertaining to a situation in which both parties integrate their concerns to the full satisfaction of each, suggests otherwise. Neither at the time of reorganization, nor certainly since then, has the integration of concerns been undertaken by Bonnyville area Boards.

It is difficult to classify the intervention strategy in terms of any of these typologies. Even a category labelled "collaborative" which might have appeared to be appropriate, on further inspection is shown to be inappropriate and indeed misleading. Typologies of strategies would seem to be of limited usefulness for describing conflict management interventions. A descriptive account that enables the uniqueness of each conflict management intervention to be revealed in its context is a more informative and useful format for the presentation of research.

Brown's (1983:54) framework with four general categories of conflict management intervention is considered to be more useful than other typologies in describing the intervention undertaken in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area. It is used as a basis for organizing comments on the effects of intervention. The four categories are listed as (1) refocusing of representatives' behaviour, (2) the reallocation of resources, (3) the reframing of issues and, (4) a realignment of forces.

E. The Effects of Intervention

First, representatives' behaviour was refocused as a result of intervention. The Sage process had the effect of altering the perceptions of key local opinion-leaders. From comments presented in the body of this report it is evident that local representatives on the Steering Committee gained a better understanding of the interests and perspectives of other groups. The change of opinion by Dr. B. Brosseau of District #2665 was probably the most apparent. But the significance of the increased understanding gained by other trustees may have been equally important.

The consultancy process also provided new opportunities for communication between representatives of the former school jurisdictions. The increased amount and flow of information among representatives provided "new technical options" (Brown, 1983:54) for representative action, namely, the opportunity to support the establishment of the coterminous school district structure. The non-threatening nature of the tactics employed in the intervention process minimized the risks involvement might have had for local representatives and promoted increased communication.

Greater communication partly, but not fully, explains the goodwill displayed by local representatives on the Ministerial Advisory Committee toward each other. As indicated by several Departmental administrators, this was a key factor in enabling intervention to occur. The Minister of Education has indicated that he hoped the promotion of increased communication would be a major outcome of the consultancy process.⁵⁶⁵

Second, the intervention clearly sought to reallocate present and future resources. Both informational and financial resources were relevant to the management of conflict. The Sage Analysis increased the informational base available to representatives and it was anticipated that the reorganized structure for school governance in the area would result in significantly greater revenue to both new Districts. Although the distribution of revenue between them would change, the key expectation was that both would be better off. The Department of Education undertook to make available additional resources to both new Districts to ensure their successful inauguration.

Third, apart from positively altering the perceptions of representatives and providing greater opportunities for communication, the consultancy process also served to reframe some

⁵⁶⁵Correspondence, D. King to R. Iles.

of the important issues and provide opportunity to explore alternative jurisdictional structures. Representatives of District #2665 were clearly concerned for the survival of their francophone-Catholic education system. Through the consultancy process they became aware that their own survival was to a large extent dependent on their willingness to form a single Catholic district with the non-francophone Catholic electors of Cold Lake, Grand Centre and Division #46. The final Sage recommendations had the effect of reducing possible threats to linguistic and religious distinctiveness and also ensured joint access to larger financial resources.

Fourth, the intervention brought about what Brown (1983:68) refers to as a realignment of forces. By forming a new coterminous district structure, a new interface was created which resulted in new parties with at least some new representatives. Through the acceptance of an open admission policy based on a tuition agreement, the boundaries of both District organizations became more permeable. The consultancy process that preceded the reorganization had enabled some shared norms and values to be recognized and accepted. Also, senior Department of Education officials sought to emphasise the costs of continued conflict and provided incentives for conflict reduction. For example, a party negatively affected by the unilateral action of the other would receive provincial support in remedying the situation.

As discussed in the study, the consultancy process appeared to result in greater acceptance of their differences among both Divisional and District #2665 personnel and gave rise to expressions of a mutual willingness to coexist. Trustee representatives certainly sought to protect the interests of their electors from exploitation but accepted the need for cooperation where common interests deemed it desirable. These changes in local representatives' perceptions, communication patterns and actions were crucial. Without such changes and a resultant willingness by local representatives to accept the major recommendation of the **Sage Report** to change the organizational structure of school governance in the area, any action by the Minister would have been much more difficult.

The reorganization of governance into coterminous public and Catholic separate districts not only changed the organizational structure but simultaneously, and of equal importance, provided opportunity for a new set of relationships between the public and separate Districts to be established. The coterminous Districts had to recognize their geographical interdependence and the need to cooperate to accomplish common tasks which neither could do alone. Cooperation is, however, becoming increasingly difficult largely as a

result of a decline in revenue growth.

In struggling to define their common interests, representatives of both Districts acknowledged that, although relations in the bargaining process may be conflictual, there were limits to conflict beyond which the Department of Education would not allow them to go. This limitation would appear to encourage a spirit of compromise and serve to control escalation of conflict. Jurisdiction reorganization, it was hoped, would provide a more appropriate structure for controlled bargaining and encourage cooperative problem solving while at the same time protecting the legitimate interests of both public and Catholic separate electors.

All four general strategies were evident in the intervention to manage education-related conflict in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area. Both the interaction of representatives and the definition and organization of the interface were altered. Contrary to Brown's (1983:80) opinion, however, both these have had short term consequences and the researcher considers that both will also have longer term consequences. For the patterns of perceptions, communications and actions of present representatives will likely help to establish the milieu in which future representatives' interaction will occur.

A number of additional comments are warranted. Intervention also resulted in some marginal modification of the wider context within which the new Districts function. Through their integrity shown during the consultancy process, promotion of reorganization and practical support to ensure the viability of each of the new Districts, Department of Education officials were, following reorganization, held in higher esteem than previously. An increased spirit of mutual trust emerged between senior local representatives and senior Departmental officials as a result of the personal relationships developed in the consultancy process.

Although it has reduced conflict between jurisdictions, reorganization may have increased tensions within the two new jurisdictions. In the Catholic District, ethnic and linguistic differences and, to a lesser extent, east-west tensions are evident, while in the public District an east-west division and urban-rural stresses exist. To some extent, reorganization has resulted in more manageable interorganization relationships between the two Districts, but has increased the complexity of their intraorganization relations. While these intraorganization stresses are, with sensitive administration, less likely to spill over into interorganization conflict, the possibility for this to occur still exists as is demonstrated by present difficulties over school attendance boundaries and transportation.

The management of conflict may involve either reducing or stimulating conflict. In the Bonnyville situation conflict reduction was the focus. The intervention strategy employed by the Minister of Education to reorganize school district governance in the area was based on the agreement of all parties as a result of a consultancy process. A number of factors were influential in enabling the implementation of jurisdictional reorganization. As already noted, participation of local opinion leaders in the consultancy process was of major importance and resulted in their perceptions being significantly altered. The willingness of these leaders to support reorganization was also influenced to a large degree by perceived self-interest. Of critical importance was the political astuteness of the Minister to act decisively at the appropriate time. The type of support given by Departmental administrators was also significant.

Reorganization has resulted in an organizational structure that should enable conflict to be more effectively managed. Local leadership recognizes the importance of the competitive interdependence of the two Lakeland Districts. Economic growth and social changes should serve to further promote conflict reduction. The potential for conflict within each district has probably been increased by reorganization, but this may constitute a positive stimulus for more sensitive and creative district leadership.

IX. REFLECTIONS

The intention in this chapter is to ponder the meaning and implications of selected themes that emerged from the study. It addresses question six of the problem statement: What significant issues and themes emerge from this research that are of relevance to the study and practice of educational administration?

As has been noted in Chapter Three of this report, early in the research the study was reconceptualized to enable significant themes apart from conflict management to emerge. A number of such themes did emerge and included the following: planning and change processes in education, decision-making, the politics of education, the limitations of the technical-rational model of administration, and the role of personal relationships in the administration of education. To reflect on all of these themes is beyond the scope of this report.

Three themes have been selected as a basis for reflective comment: (1) leadership in interorganizational conflict, (2) the organization of public education, and (3) multiculturalism. These themes were selected because of their centrality in the study, relevance to current practice and research in educational administration, and interest to the researcher.

Several writers have pointed to the value of reflection. Bennis (1976:165) refers to the need for "reflective structures where we can take time out to examine ourselves and our operations in a very serious way." Goodlad (1978:324) has stated that "reflection is a luxury in which we too little indulge."

Reflections on each of the three selected themes were guided by a central question. In each instance the researcher attempted to stand aside from the study and expand on the meaning and implications that these themes may have especially for administrative practice. Reflections were nevertheless anchored in the study data.

A. Leadership in Interorganizational Conflict

In almost every sphere of human conduct, evidence abounds as to the importance of leadership in the accomplishment of desired objectives. It was undoubtedly a significant factor in the intervention that resulted in the reorganization of school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area. Yet, despite its importance and the very great deal of attention given it by organizational theorists and researchers over the past fifty years, Bennis (1976:175) has stated that "There are no possible generalizations about leadership."

If the assumption is accepted that human social reality is inherently different from physical reality, it may be considered doubtful that law-like generalizations concerning leadership can ever be formulated. This conclusion is evident from both Stogdill's (1974) comprehensive survey of the research literature and Burns' (1978) more descriptive account of leadership. Because leadership is contextually dependent, it may be useful to engage in some reflection on leadership in specific situations as a means to expand our understanding.

To assist in guiding these reflections the following question has been formulated:

In the light of this study, what characteristics of leadership may be of most significance in the management of interorganizational conflict?

Responses to this question are presented under two headings. First, some aspects of the relationship between leadership and conflict management are explored and five important characteristics of leadership for the management of interorganization conflict that emerged from this study are outlined. Second, the idea that leadership involves tactfulness and reflection-in-action is discussed.

Leadership and the Management of Conflict

In his study of administrative leadership, Hodgkinson (1983:201) has conceptualized leadership as covering "the gamut of administrative-managerial process." This process is considered to be partly logical but "massively valuational" and has its outcome in the "distinctive administrative act" of decision making. He writes (1983:202):

. . . leadership is intrinsically valuational. Logic may set limits for and parameters within the field of value action but value phenomena determine what occurs within the field.

Leadership is viewed to be "intrinsically valuational" and by its nature a "practical philosophy, philosophy-in-action" (Hodgkinson, 1983:202). The leadership of the Minister of Education,

Dr. Odynak the chairman of the Ministerial Advisory Committee and Dr. Stringham director of the Sage Institute was in each case characterized by an awareness of the value saturated context within which the process that resulted in reorganization occurred.

Not only are values central to administrative leadership, but they are also to a very large degree highly subjective and therefore conflictual. In this regard Hodgkinson (1983:205) has stated:

Our values ultimately are couched in language and we seek more or less continuously to change the values of others through such language games as rhetoric, politics and diplomacy. Conflict is implicit . . . So in this sense the very terrain of leadership is linguistic. The battles fought on that terrain are effective and valuational and the unending work of leadership is not only to mediate and resolve conflict but from time to time to initiate it.

This study has described such valuational conflict and the attempt, through a variety of "language games," by those charged with leadership responsibility to seek its mediation and resolution. It would appear that Hodgkinson is correct in his view that "value analysis and conflict management are integral parts of decision making and leadership skills" (1983:205). In the process that led to reorganization both Departmental and local leaders went through a series of stages that formed the basis for praxis: (1) information was gathered and assembled, (2) this was subjected to study and reflection in which facts and values were identified, and (3) leaders (and participants) entered into a commitment for particular action. In Hodgkinson's (1983:27) terms this process of administrative leadership (articulation of philosophy planning and political will) became the basis for subsequent management action (mobilizing, managing, monitoring).

The conflicts of interest apparent in this study were to a large extent conflicts of values and support Hodgkinson's (1983:206) statement that these conflicts are power struggles in which "an interest is a value cathected to a fact. Conflicts of interests are conflicts of values at one or two removes." Conflict is therefore seen as an inevitable part of life in organizations. Although Hodgkinson (1983:206) concludes, "There is no escape from it and much must be endured," nevertheless levels of conflict may be responsive to appropriate leadership. As was revealed in this study, other factors may partially frustrate the attainment of particular goals. Even so, it is useful to identify leadership characteristics that emerged as being of some importance in this study.

Five specific characteristics of leadership in interorganizational conflict situations were identified in the study. Several relate to Hodgkinson's (1983:26-29) administrative leadership

while others pertain more to his managerial leadership. But since both are "inextricably intertwined and interdependent" no attempt is made here to categorize them further. All five are clearly value laden.

Vision. Unlike much political activity, the leadership exercised by the Minister of Education appears to have been based on a long term perspective. His decision to establish the Ministerial Advisory Committee with a mandate to complete a wide ranging study of the educational needs of the area appears to have been based on a desire to tackle underlying problems. Although not clearly defined, the Minister communicated to local opinion leaders his entrepreneurial vision of better education services in the future. As part of the Sage study process, local representatives as well as Departmental administrators appeared to also capture the vision, at least temporarily. Both the Minister and the local representatives accepted the political risk inherent in pursuing this vision.

Flexibility. A second characteristic evident in the leadership of the conflict management intervention was flexibility. Although the format of the study process was structured, no predetermined path appears to have been defined. The Committee had the flexibility to seek out those solutions that seemed most appropriate. The Minister, his senior administrators and local opinion leaders were prepared to attempt a unique solution to the conflictual difficulties. On the other hand, Bennis (1976:170) stated that "When leaders are ineffective, it's often because they tend to reply in identical, static ways to problems that differ greatly." The researcher has formed the impression that one reason for the prolonging of conflicts in the Bonnyville area was the unwillingness of previous Ministers of Education and Departmental personnel to attempt to respond to it in innovative ways.

Timing. A third characteristic may be identified as timing. Potentially far reaching changes in the social and economic structures of the area provided opportunity for a political response to the articulated concerns of all the local jurisdictions. There was considerable incentive for all jurisdictions in the area to participate. In addition, the Minister's relatively recent appointment to the portfolio allowed him to approach the issues unencumbered by perceived negative effects from earlier decisions. The Minister permitted the study process to proceed at its own pace allowing representatives to think through the issues. On the other hand, he used the trustee elections scheduled for October 1980 as the grounds for very rapid implementation. Propitious timing was significant at several points in the intervention process.

Participation. A fourth feature of leadership was the willingness of provincial administrators on the Ministerial Advisory Committee to ensure maximum participation by local representatives in the Committee's decision-making process. These representatives were perceived as key local opinion leaders with their own constituencies and they were acknowledged as such. Respect was shown by these provincial educational leaders toward the norms, values, religious and cultural beliefs of the local communities. They were sensitive toward the cultural needs of local people and were able to assist them to chart a positive course.

In this regard a central role was played by Dr. Odynak as chairman of the Ministerial Advisory Committee. His purposeful, non-threatening and knowledgeable leadership together with the establishment of good morale and sound formal and informal communication practices enabled confidence to be established in the integrity of his leadership. Participation was considered worthwhile because local representatives had a major decision-making role in the consultancy process.

Goodwill. A fifth characteristic of leadership was that it avoided dissipating the spirit of goodwill of key local representatives on the Ministerial Advisory Committee. Evidence in this report indicates that without this goodwill the whole project would have stalled. This characteristic is rarely discussed in leadership literature, but may be of considerable significance in conflict management situations. Although goodwill derives from individual attitude and values, leaders ought not only to promote such an attitude but must also endeavour to do nothing that would cause its dissipation.

These five characteristics of leadership were evident in the conflict management situation studied. Each would appear significant to other administrative situations where leaders seek creatively to reduce conflict in interorganizational settings.

Tactfulness and Reflection-in-Action

As has been indicated, leadership was a shared function of different individuals, at different times, and in different contexts. The Minister exercised leadership, as did Dr. Stringham and the local representatives. Dr. Odynak, as chairman of the Advisory Committee, can however be considered the group leader and certainly occupied the significant leadership role on occasions. He was an initiator and director of the work of the Ministerial Committee, chairman of its meetings and bore the major political responsibility for the Committee's work.

Yet, at other times, he was more a facilitator and coordinator or simply a group member. Such a conception of leadership has been captured by Greenleaf (1977:244) in his discussion of a future form of "servant leadership,"

Leadership . . . will be a different thing from what we customarily assume. There will still be a titular leader, but such a person will not be seen as "chief". Rather it will be a role from which oversight is given to a much more fluid arrangement in which leaders and followers change places as many-faceted missions are undertaken and moves into phases that call for different deployment of talent.

In interorganizational settings where a major purpose is the management of conflict situations, leadership is likely to be a shared responsibility. Those who organize and coordinate such meetings should be prepared to accept the role of follower at certain times if chances of a successful outcome are to be maximized.

Leadership is, at any time, "a complex dynamic function." The literature suggests a number of "analytic dimensions" some of which Hodgkinson (1978:92) lists as follows:

The nature of the task; the psychological relationships between leader and led, power and authority (formal and informal) of the leader; the informal organization of followship, the favourableness of the situation (Fiedler, 1967); the characteristics and character of the leader, and of the led, the general organizational structure, history and context.

This list, as does much of the research on leadership, seems to apply more fittingly to a single organization with a hierarchically defined leader. In situations in which representatives of different organizations come together for a specific purpose, additional dimensions may be required for the adequate analysis of leadership. The title "leader" of course is not always synonymous with leadership. An individual may occupy a designated position as chairman or director for a particular task, but his power and authority to affect the philosophical, planning and political process (i.e. administrative leadership) may be very much constrained. In interorganizational settings, where a very clear distinction between leader and led may not always be considered appropriate, it may be useful to distinguish the administrative leadership functions from the managerial functions of coordinating, facilitating and chairing as suggested by Hodgkinson (1983:26-27).

No evidence emerged to suggest that the leadership contributed by any of those indicated above was based on a particular model or theory of leadership. Rather the leadership evident from the study might best be described as a leadership based on what Schon (1983:49) refers to as "reflection-in-action" and Hodgkinson refers to as "philosophy-in-action" (1983:26). The intuitive, tacit knowledge that various individuals possessed concerning the

social, cultural and political environment of education in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area often constituted the basis for leadership. For example, even though local representatives had data from survey-based research, their leadership in goal establishment was nevertheless dependent upon their tacit situational knowledge and judgments concerning practicability of various sources of action.

Leadership contributed by the chairman of the Ministerial Advisory Committee and other Departmental officials served to fulfil in practice a large part of what Hodgkinson (1983:201) has argued as being necessary in any satisfactory philosophy of leadership.

Most expressly, it demands for its adherents some comprehensive grasp of the logic and technology of organizational behaviour and, even more importantly, a corresponding grasp of the logic of value as the basis for praxis and administrative philosophy.

An understanding both of "the logic and technology of organizational behaviour" and of "the logic of value" was evident in their leadership.

Leadership may also be conceptualized as involving (a) theoretic knowledge, (b) skill which "permits us to act comfortably, in a matter-of-course, in specific situations, under specific circumstances, or conditions, without, however, having insights into those circumstances or conditions," and (c) tactfulness (van Manen, 1984:2). This latter term has been defined by van Manen (1984:2) in relation to teaching as being "sensitivity or sensitiveness to a situation that enables me to do pedagogically the right thing for the child." In leadership situations tact might be thought of as being a sensitivity and knowledge of how to act for the well-being of followers or other participants. As the concept of "well-being" is highly value saturated, this tripartite conception of the elements of leadership complements Hodgkinson's "logic of value." The process by which theoretical knowledge, skill and tactfulness are brought together may be described as reflection-in-action.

The consultancy leadership of Dr. Stringham was an example of what Schon (1983:69) has referred to as placing "technical problem-solving within a broader context of reflective inquiry." The Sage fault tree analysis process enabled meaningful data in a usable form to be placed before the Committee. Dr. Stringham, however, used these data as a basis for leading the Committee through a process of reflective inquiry to decide on the most appropriate courses of action. He was able to offer leadership that brought together established theory (e.g. relating to participatory problem solving) and technique (Sage Analysis) to enable these to be applied by the Steering Committee to a unique case. Although not writing specially in the

context of leadership, Schon's discussion of the basis of professional knowledge and action has application to such leadership situations. He described the bringing together of theory, technique and reflection which is what constituted the essence of much of the leadership evident in the study:

When someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case. His inquiry is not limited to a deliberation about means which depends on a prior agreement about ends. He does not keep means and ends separate, but defines them interactively as he frames a problematic situation. He does not separate thinking from doing, ratiocinating his way to a decision which he must later convert to action. Because his experimenting is a kind of action, implementation is built into his inquiry. Thus reflection-in-action can proceed, even in situations of uncertainty or uniqueness, because it is not bound by the dichotomies of Technical Rationality. (Schon, 1983:68)

The leadership of the Minister of Education, Dr. Odynak, Dr. Stringham, local representatives on the Advisory Committee, the Official Trustees and the district superintendents all displayed to a greater or lesser extent reflection-in-action in which tactfulness based on a consideration of preferred values was used to guide the application of theoretical knowledge and practical skill.

B. The Organization of Public Education

In several western democracies, the organization of public education has recently been the focus of increased concern. In Alberta such matters are currently of special interest because of the declared intention of the Alberta Minister of Education, announced 16 February 1984, to conduct a review of the province's School Act "for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a system of governance for education compatible with our values, our historic experience and our goals."⁵⁶⁶

Two particular issues are discussed: (1) religion and the organization of public education, and (2) school district fragmentation. These reflections are centred around the following question:

By what means, if at all, should a secular multicultural state provide for the expression of the close relationship with religion that many citizens, though by no means all, consider fundamental to the educational process.

Both the philosophical and practical issues raised by this question are addressed, although greater emphasis has been placed on the discussion of some practical issues that are of current concern in education. Public education refers to K-12 schooling that is provided,

⁵⁶⁶Quoted in *The School Act: A Discussion Paper*, Alberta Education, n.d., p. 1.

funded and controlled by provincial and local governments. In Alberta this includes both public and separate schools.

Religion and the Organization of Education

Background. In the history of most western democracies, the issue of the role of religion in the organization of public education has assumed a place of considerable significance. For example, before their adoption at the end of the Nineteenth Century of the principles of a compulsory, free and secular education system, the administration of public education in each of the Australian states had been plagued by denominational controversy. Various solutions to the basic problem also evolved in Britain, a number of European countries and the United States. In Canada different patterns of public education emerged in the various provinces in response to this issue.

In Alberta the provisions of the **Ordinances of the North West Territories** 1901, and the **Alberta Act** 1905 provided for a system of school organization with public and separate districts determined by whether an elector belongs to the majority or minority religion of the district. Deriving from the historical situation of Eastern Canada, these Acts assumed that all citizens were Christian and could be classified into Protestant and Catholic groupings. Furthermore, these legislative provisions, which are reinforced by the **School Act** 1980 S. 59, require that religious affiliation also be the determining factor in the allocation of property taxes between public and separate districts.

This legal situation raises a number of questions such as the following : Is division into majority and minority groupings on the basis of Protestant and Roman Catholic branches of Christianity a proper legal basis for the provision of educational services in a multicultural society? What provision is made for non-Christians? What rights do members of a majority or minority group have if they do not wish their religious affiliation to determine their membership of a school district; or in other words, what are the rights of the individual as against the rights of the group?

Similar questions have been raised in the recently published Discussion Paper from Alberta Education relating to the proposed revision of the **School Act** in 1985. For example:

Is the current system of establishing separate school jurisdictions appropriate?
Is it appropriate to determine [school district] residence by faith?
Should those who declare no religious affiliation have the freedom to choose which system they will support?

Should parents have the responsibility to determine which school their child will attend? What limits, if any, should be placed on the exercise of this responsibility?⁵⁶⁷

In the following section, questions relating to aspects of the pattern of educational organization that has been developed in Alberta are discussed. Insights provided by this study are used as a basis for these reflections.

Open-Door Admission Policy. From the study it is evident that considerable support exists in the Lakeland School Districts for both the Catholic separate and the largely secular public school systems. The francophone population is able to protect its language and culture within a multicultural Catholic system. Surveys conducted by Lakeland S.D. #5460 regarding a religious studies course at grade seven level and Bible reading in schools indicate that many parents desire a secular school system.

On the other hand, present organizational arrangements do not satisfy all parents. The legal denial of freedom of choice to persons of Roman Catholic faith is a source of dissatisfaction to a sizable minority of non-francophone Catholics in the area. To such people faith clearly is not a proper basis on which to determine their residence in a school district. For reasons of ethnicity, language and personal philosophy, some Catholics would prefer to belong to the public system. The question is therefore raised as to whether it is justifiable in a democratic society for the state to determine criteria, other than parental preference, as the basis for the type of schooling their children receive.

The wording of Section 17 of the *Alberta Act* 1905 prohibits the province from making any law that "shall prejudicially affect any right or privilege with respect to separate schools which any class of persons have at the date of passing this Act . . ." This has been interpreted in the *Neida Case*⁵⁶⁸ to mean that "if a separate school exists in a district, the ratepayer has no choice but to support the school operated by members of his religious denomination" (Bargen, 1961:21).

On this basis, many Roman Catholics who have been supporters of local public schools under Division #46 were forced to become separate school supporters following reorganization, or take the step of denying, at least for the purpose of the allocation of their taxes, their Catholic faith.

⁵⁶⁷*The School Act: A Discussion Paper*, Alberta Education, n.d. p. 4.

⁵⁶⁸*McCarthy V's City of Regina and the Regina Board of P.S.Trustees*, 1917, referenced in P. Bargen (1961:18).

The establishment of electoral and tax rolls following reorganization would have been a much simpler and less divisive procedure had the Alberta law on this matter been similar to that in Ontario. In that province a Roman Catholic parent may elect the school system to which his taxes go (Bargen, 1961:29).

Based on the Ontario experience, it would appear that the granting of the right of choice to parents as to whether they support the public or separate school system is not likely to significantly affect the viability of a separate district. Indeed, at present in the Lakeland School District, the amount paid in tuition and transportation payments by the Separate District on behalf of those of its residents' children who attend public District schools is possibly greater than the tax revenue gained from the parents of the children concerned.⁵⁶⁹ Both on practical grounds and for reasons of principle, it would seem that the right of choice should be placed in the hands of parents. The difficulty of writing into the *School Act* a clause that would enable persons of the religious minority not to be considered a member of that "class of persons" and remain intra vires Section 17 (1) of the *Alberta Act* 1905, may, however, be insurmountable.

If such is the case, the administrative alternative is an open-door admissions policy between public and separate jurisdictions. To date such a policy has been maintained by the two Lakeland jurisdictions, although as indicated in Chapter Seven, there are financial pressures to change this policy. In large measure the relatively smooth establishment of the Separate District was due to the maintenance of an open-door policy. If change in the constitutional law is too difficult, the government in a multicultural society in which the primary rights pertaining to education reside with parents should seek to ensure an open-door policy between public and separate districts. A means of promoting such a policy is for the province to offer financial incentives in the School Foundation Program formula that will support an open-door policy based on tuition agreements. In addition, active public promotion of the policy by the provincial Department of Education would also enhance its implementation.

Rights of Minority Electors. Within the present Alberta legal provisions, the right of Roman Catholic electors to determine whether or not they desire to establish a separate school district is open to political manipulation. Although the term "school district" in Alberta, particularly in rural areas, traditionally has referred to an area of approximately 4 X 4 miles, under Section 14(1) of the *School Act* 1970 the term is loosely defined to be "any portion of

⁵⁶⁹C. Vincent, Interview.

Alberta" so named by the Minister.

In the Lakeland reorganization Roman Catholic electors of Division #46 were denied the right of voting in their long-standing 4 X 4 districts. It was quite likely that Catholic electors, in some districts at least, would have returned a majority "no" vote. By being included with the numerically overwhelming francophone community in Bonnyville, it could be argued that rural people were deprived of a long-standing right, namely, the right to express their views as electors of a 4 X 4 district community.

The Minister's arbitrary redefinition of the meaning of the term "school district" in the Bonnyville situation did enable reorganization to be swiftly implemented. It also, however, denied to Roman Catholic residents of Division #46 the right on a 4 X 4 district basis to express their opinion on the formation of a separate district. This redefinition of "district", while seemingly legal, does raise questions of fairness and justice. In requiring these residents to vote within a much larger unit the Minister effectively deprived them of a right which they had previously enjoyed.

The dual public and separate system of public education in a number of Canadian provinces is based on the now anachronistic assumption that the community is Christian in religion and can be divided into a majority and a minority group on a Catholic-Protestant basis. In practice, however, the majority group loses its right to any distinctive religious-philosophical orientation because it becomes the public system, obliged to accept all students who seek admission except those of the minority group. Thus, to protect the distinctive Roman Catholic orientation of their schools, the trustees of former public District #2665 agreed to becoming the minority group in a larger voting unit to enable the formation of a separate school district at the time of reorganization.

Although not a highly influential factor in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area, there are people who would prefer a stronger religious basis for education in the public schools. But due to the wide diversity of beliefs held by public school supporters it has not been possible for the Board of Lakeland S.D.#5460 to do other than give minimum recognition to religion in either its practices or programs. The major exception is the provision of religious education classes for Roman Catholic pupils at Fort Kent. The efforts of some of its electors, including a group of Protestant clergy in Bonnyville, to have a greater Protestant religious input into the school have been rejected.

This situation gives rise to the criticism that the **School Act** permits only the minority group to retain a strong religiously based identity. The recent decision by the Calgary public Board to terminate its administration of two distinctively Christian (Protestant) schools highlights the lack of protection which the present law gives to those of a Protestant majority who desire a Christian orientation within the public schools.

In view of a growing acceptance of multiculturalism, and in consideration of the difficulties involved in changing the religio-legal basis of education in Alberta as laid out in the **Alberta Act 1905**, structural modification probably needs to be addressed within the present constitutional constraints. Perhaps within the public school system of a multicultural society there ought to be provision for a range of schools with distinctive philosophies where numbers warranted. This position appears to have been endorsed in a recent discussion paper published by the Alberta Committee on Tolerance and Understanding.⁵⁷⁰ Although the Committee has approached the issue from the standpoint of supervision, the further development of alternate schools would provide a measure of choice for a larger number of parents as to the philosophical and cultural values they deem should surround their child's education. It is unfortunate that, after considerable political struggle, the Board of Calgary School District terminated what could have been a prototype for schools of distinctive religious orientation to be part of the public system.

School District Fragmentation

In any attempt to maximize the opportunities for distinctive minority groups to operate their own schools, the difficulties inherent in further fragmentation of governance structures need to be avoided. Even under present legislation, fragmentation is of concern.

Both the Minister and some senior Departmental administrators viewed as undesirable the fragmentation of school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area prior to reorganization. Interviews revealed that there was a growing concern over fragmentation in the province generally. One senior administrator described the situation in the following terms:

One of the larger considerations in my mind was this whole question of how do we grapple with the issue of fragmentation in this province . . . British Columbia has a student population fifteen percent higher than ours but has half the number of jurisdictions. Ontario has four and a half times the student population of Alberta and

⁵⁷⁰**Private Education in Alberta**, Committee on Tolerance and Understanding, Discussion Paper #1, May 1984.

has two thirds the number of school jurisdictions.⁵⁷¹

An effect of such fragmentation is that through payment of the Small Schools Assistance Grants, Small School Jurisdiction Grants and Supplementary Requisition Equalization Grants, "dollars allocated for education [are used] to account for factors that don't deliver education."⁵⁷² This administrator argued that larger units of administration result in economies of scale. In addition, the delivery and accessibility of a greater variety of programs is made possible. At a time of financial restraint it is argued that the Lakeland prototype is functional for rural areas. It allows for each individual jurisdiction to do alone those things it can, while generally limiting joint action to those things that could not be done alone.

In the Lakeland School District, cooperative action is undertaken in regard to transportation and, to date, the operation of Bonnyville Centralized High School. Alongside cooperation is the recognition that each system has greater expertise in some areas. For example, the Catholic Board of Education has considerable expertise and resources in the conduct of bilingual programs and multicultural education generally. The public District has had greater experience in the operation of programs for handicapped students. To cooperate and also effectively utilize each other's expertise, the operation of an open-door policy in relation to student admission is highly desirable. Not only are parents able to exercise their basic rights, but each District can avoid unnecessary and inefficient allocation of costly resources to specialist areas.

The Bonnyville prototype does constitute a model that seemingly could be applied to other areas of Alberta. As detailed in this study there are problems in its implementation. People from formerly independent jurisdictions to some degree do resent their loss of autonomy. There is the difficulty of forcing persons because of their religion into a separate school district in areas where those people have previously chosen to remain in a public jurisdiction. In districts where a majority of eligible voters from the religious minority reject their incorporation into a separate system, it may be necessary to allow individual districts to remain entirely within the public division. In such cases, the public jurisdictions must practice an open-door policy that allows individual parents of the minority religion to send their children to a school of the neighbouring separate jurisdiction.

⁵⁷¹W. R. Duke, Interview.

⁵⁷²W. R. Duke, Interview.

While the Bonnyville coterminous jurisdictional model may be applicable to other rural areas of Alberta, its implementation may be a more difficult process. Without the incentive of access to large amounts of corporate tax revenues, local jurisdictions may not be so ready to give up their autonomy. In future, residents of rural districts to be affected by a proposed jurisdictional reorganization will likely demand greater involvement in the planning processes before allowing their current rights to be significantly diminished by Ministerial redefinition of the term "school district." In a future reorganization it is unlikely that the entire planning and decision-making process will be left in the hands of trustees and administrators alone. This will be especially the case in districts where at present a majority of members of the minority religious group prefer their children to attend a public school.

C. Multiculturalism

Two aspects of multiculturalism⁵⁷³ that emerged from the study are discussed. The first section is focused on the importance of language in cultural preservation. In the second, the centrality of culture in understanding educational organization is related to the need for the provision of organizational structures in which particular cultural groups will feel comfortable in expressing their cultural values.

The question formulated to guide reflections on these aspects of multiculturalism was stated as:

Of what significance for the administration of education is : (1) language in cultural preservation and (2) educational structure in providing for the expression of philosophical and cultural values?

Language and Multiculturalism

Fundamental to any consideration of multiculturalism in public education is reference to language. More so, than religion, language is "a central issue in any discussion of culture, because it is simultaneously an artifact and part of the process itself" (Zerebecky, 1982:80). The centrality of language resides in the fact that "without language a superficial kind of culture emerges, one confined to such aspects as folk dancing, native costumes, special foods, decorative art, or folk songs which few can understand" (Zerebecky, 1982:81).

⁵⁷³Multiculturalism is understood in this chapter as referring to the promotion and development of cultural diversity and tolerance for that diversity.

The importance of language in the retention of their culture has been understood by the francophone-Catholic community in Bonnyville for a long time. Conversely, the small francophone-Protestant community allowed the use of French to give way to English and were assimilated into the anglophone community. Admittedly, at the outset they were a much smaller group.

Most francophones have been Roman Catholic and this group has been numerically the dominant population in Bonnyville. They were thus able to form and control a public school district. Throughout the history of that district, and at the cost of much conflict, they have maintained their identity partly through control of their schools in which the French language and a distinctive culture were strongly promoted. As a result, Lakeland Catholic Board of Education is able to offer excellent bilingual and multicultural programs. Its experience seems to support and be an example of Zerebecky's (1987:85) statement regarding the understanding of one's culture as an important factor in the appreciation of multicultural perspectives:

. . . before any such tolerance, respect, or understanding can occur, I believe an individual must develop a self-awareness and a self-acceptance. In order to do so, it is essential to develop a positive awareness of one's own cultural heritage in all its aspects - its language, history, literature, ethnography, religion, and morals - in short, that culture's human acquired capabilities and habits. Out of this self-confidence can grow an understanding of and respect for the people of other cultural groups.

Within the Lakeland Catholic District there is a strong pursuit of multiculturalism. Apart from French bilingual programs in Bonnyville, there is a Cree studies program at the Elizabeth Settlement school. District trustees have expressed a willingness to provide Ukrainian language programs but low numbers have been a problem in implementing these programs. The fact that francophones are dominant in the administration and control of the system may well serve to enhance multiculturalism in the District.

It is suggested that the provision of strong second language and cultural programs by school jurisdictions will promote multiculturalism. These serve to promote a greater understanding of Canadian identity in which cultural pluralism is viewed as a part of the essence of being Canadian. In this regard McLeod (1981:13-14) has written:

We originated from many backgrounds, but that does not deny a sense of commonality. There is recognition that Canadian citizenship is a priority, that what Canadians mutually develop and adopt has a fundamental place in Canadian identity . . . multiculturalism does not relegate or deny commonality. On the contrary it postulates that all Canadians be recognized as part of mainstream society.

Sound multicultural programs will be characterized by an acknowledgement of the importance for students to become aware of and understand their own cultural heritage, a

strong pursuit of second language programs, and the promotion of sharing and choice in relation to life styles. In the study, all these features have been identified by trustees of the Bonnyville Catholic Board of Education.

Educational Administration and Multiculturalism

In recent years criticism has been directed at researchers in educational administration because of widespread neglect in developing culturally based critiques of the field (Bates, 1980; Foster, 1980; Giroux, 1981; and Greenfield 1979, 1980). For example, Bates (1982:5) has argued that:

. . . organizations are cultures rather than structures and it is the maintenance and contestation of what is to constitute the culture of the organizational life that provides the dynamic of rationality, legitimation and motivation in organizations. This dynamic is the praxis of organizations.

Although organizations may be considered as possessing their own cultural characteristics and in that sense being cultures, it is probably more useful to consider them as being manifestations of a culture. Greenfield (1982:2) reflected such an understanding when he stated that:

. . . organizations are manifestations of culture, and we may understand them only with as much ease or difficulty as we understand the culture in which they are embedded.

But Bates (1982:6) appears to be correct in stating that culture⁵⁷⁴ may be considered as "the prime resource of educational practice" and the basic purpose of educational organizations as "the maintenance, transmission and recreation of culture."

The question which then arises as to what particular culture is to be promoted in a school has become, in the opinion of many analysts, the fundamental educational question. Its relevance is intensified in a multicultural society. English educationist Bantock (1973) has argued that:

. . . the basic educational dilemma of our time is a cultural one and affects the nature of meanings to be transmitted by the school.

From a strongly ideological perspective, but one which is not entirely out of place in a multicultural environment, Bowles and Gintis (1976:5) have written:

. . . the educational system . . . has become the laboratory in which competing solutions to the problems of personal liberation and social equality are tested and the

⁵⁷⁴Defined as the "beliefs, languages, rituals, knowledge, conventions, courtesies and artifacts . . . the resources from which individual social identities are constructed." (Bates, 1982:6)

arena in which social struggles are fought.

In a discussion of the conflicts that arise as a result of the use of various metaphors in education systems, Bates has suggested that:

The metaphors which people use are often representative of a kind of future (the social movement) to which they are consciously or unconsciously committed. Such cultural commitment is frequently passionate and contains views of man, society and education which are closely related to the meaning and identity of the individual.

In schools and school systems cultural control is exercised in a number of ways. These have been identified by Bates (1982:12) as administrative control of (1) curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation; (2) the processes of [teacher] training and professionalization; and (3) the allocation of physical resources.

Discussion of cultural control has often been conducted in avowedly ideological terms (Bates, 1982; Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Freire, 1972). It is not necessary to accept the often argued dichotomy between bureaucratic, centralized forms of control and participatory, liberationist, activist forms in order to make use of a cultural control perspective in analysing aspects of educational administration. Such a dichotomy is too simplistic. There are, it would appear, levels and degrees of participation. Equally there must be levels and degrees of centralization in any ordered undertaking. In educational administration, participation and centralization must be held in dynamic tension. This prevails at both provincial and local school jurisdiction levels as well as between the two levels.

The importance of cultural control for the furtherance of particular goals was understood by trustees and administrators in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area. As noted in the previous section, administrative control of their jurisdiction was considered by francophone leaders as essential to the cultural control of their school and, in turn, to the transmission of their culture. Their commitment to particular views of "man, society and education" meant that any attempt to weaken the transmission of such views had to be resisted.

Although administrative control in much of the three areas listed by Bates is exercised by the provincial government in Alberta through legislation, in areas of pedagogy, evaluation and the allocation of resources especially, local jurisdictions have some measure of autonomy. It is the exercise of these autonomous powers through local administrative control that seems to largely explain the motivation of francophone-Catholic leaders to struggle so determinedly to remain autonomous. It also serves to partially explain the present francophone dominance on the Lakeland Catholic Board of Education.

The significance of local autonomy was reflected and summed up by Greenfield (1973:570) when he wrote:

What many people seem to want from schools is that schools reflect the values that are central and meaningful to their lives. If this view is correct, schools are cultural artifacts that people struggle to shape in their own image. Only in such forms do they have faith in them, only in such forms can they participate comfortably in them.

Participation is empty and meaningless when it occurs within a cultural framework that does not reflect the central values of an individual's life. Many francophone-Catholics could never comfortably participate in the operations of Division #46 because it did not and could not promote the values that those people held to be most important.

Given that not all cultural groups can or desire to operate their own schools, what implications does the contestation of cultural control of schooling at the local level have for provincial administrators and legislators?

A society concerned for the welfare of individual citizens and the minimization of organizational conflict in education needs to ensure that its government permits maximum cultural control at the local jurisdictional and individual school levels. Groups of sufficient numerical strength and possessing distinctive cultural values, which are not held to be in opposition to the basic values of the whole society as enshrined by law, should be assisted in a multicultural society to exercise some measure of cultural control in regard to the schooling of their children. The centrality of language in this process has been discussed in the previous section. In the Bonnyville area francophone-Catholics have been able to maintain cultural control because of their numerical strength and geographical concentration.

At the same time, however, fragmentation of school jurisdictions should be curtailed in Alberta. Therefore, opportunities for cultural control should be promoted at the level of individual schools within a multicultural jurisdictional framework. No one cultural group should be so dominant as to smother the cultural expression of other smaller groups. Ideally, this pattern should prevail in both public and separate systems. Diversity should be encouraged between schools and within schools in both public and separate jurisdictions. Draft recommendation #1 in the Discussion Paper of the Alberta Committee on Tolerance and Understanding that proposes alternative schools/programs within public systems appears to reflect a similar stance.⁵⁷⁵ A legislative base for jurisdictional organization in Alberta that is

⁵⁷⁵Private Education in Alberta, Committee for Tolerance and Understanding, Discussion Paper #1, May 1984, p. 21.

flexible enough to provide for alternate school programs reflecting particular philosophical values would enhance the multicultural objectives of the society. The forthcoming revision of the **School Act** provides an occasion to attend to the matter. But not only must provincial authorities adopt a more flexible approach to the organization and administration of education, local trustees and administrators must also. To ensure the latter may well be the more difficult task.

X. SUMMARY AND METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Part A of this chapter contains a summary of the study, its findings and the reflections developed on selected themes. In Part B some methodological reflections are presented. The chapter concludes with a short postscript.

A. Summary

A summary is presented of the research problems addressed by the study, its relevance, and its research design and methodology. The substantive chapters of this report are then summarized under the headings of historical background, the 1979-80 consultancy process, implementation and consequences. A review of findings related to conflict management and reflections on leadership in interorganizational conflict, the organization of public education and multiculturalism conclude the section.

Problems Addressed by the Study

The major research problem addressed by the study was: Why, how and with what consequences did the Minister of Education reorganize school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area of north-eastern Alberta in September 1980?

A number of more specific questions were generated to guide the research. These were divided in two parts - substantive and reflective.

Five substantive questions were listed:

1. What was the nature and basis of the long-standing educational conflict in the area?
2. What factors precipitated the establishment of the Ministerial Advisory Committee in October 1979?
3. What were the purposes of the Ministerial Advisory Committee and how did it attempt to fulfil these?
4. Why was it considered desirable and possible to implement reorganization?
5. What were the consequences of reorganization as perceived by administrators and trustees.

Two questions of a reflective nature were also formulated:

6. What significant issues and themes emerge from this research that are of relevance to the

study and practice of educational administration?

7. How useful is a hermeneutically oriented naturalistic case study methodology for research in educational administration?

Relevance of the Study

Conflict is an important and ubiquitous characteristic of any organizational life. Nevertheless, it has been the subject of relatively little research in educational contexts. The jurisdictional reorganization in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre, an area which had experienced considerable education-related conflict, provided a topic that enabled aspects of conflict and its management in a specific context to be researched. The reorganization had resulted in a coterminous public and separate jurisdiction prototype that warranted investigation. In Canada's multicultural society linguistic and cultural values are of growing significance for educational administrators and in particular in the implications these have for the organization of public education and the problem of the fragmentation of school governance. These issues emerge in the study.

Research Design and Methodology

This was a descriptive case study in which an attempt was made to use the naturalistic research paradigm explicated by Guba and Guba and Lincoln. This paradigm is of a hermeneutic orientation in which major objectives are understanding and the interpretation of meaning. Data were collected by interview of past and present area school trustees and local and provincial administrators. An extensive survey of documentary sources was also conducted.

Data were analysed both during and subsequent to their collection. Previously assembled data were used to guide the collection of further data. Research trustworthiness was addressed by appropriate measures to ensure the credibility, dependability and confirmability of the data.

The Substantive Study

The research was organized into four descriptive chapters. Brief details of each of these chapters are outlined.

The Historical Background. An overview of selected characteristics and aspects of the operational history of eight of the former school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area for the period 1912-1980 was provided. These jurisdictions included Bonnyville S.D.#2665, Bonnyville S.Div.#46, Bonnyville R.S.D.#4, Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64, Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67, Bevan R.C.S.S.D.#124, Willow Trail R.C.S.S.D.#125 and the Duclos P.S.S.#2 which became part of Bonnyville S.Div.#46 in 1954.

Six major areas of educational conflict in the period 1969-1979 were identified and briefly discussed: religion, language and ethnicity, jurisdiction boundaries and transportation, local assessment revenue, Bonnyville Centralized High School and inter-town rivalry. None of the conflict issues within these six areas can be understood in isolation. Issues argued on grounds of educational philosophy and cultural and religious preference often emerged as conflicts over substantive issues of transportation, finance and the operation of the Centralized High School.

The overview was concluded with a description of the short term ad hoc approaches adopted by the provincial Department of Education to the area's educational conflicts. The political will to seriously address the root problems of educational governance in the Bonnyville area was often lacking.

The 1979-80 Consultancy Process. A combination of factors influenced the decision by the Minister of Education to attempt to find a more satisfactory solution to the long-standing conflicts over education in the Bonnyville area than had resulted from previous ad hoc approaches. In light of the stated provincial policy on educational language rights, a number of francophone parents living in Division #46 areas had embarked on a concerted campaign to seek provincial involvement in their attempt to gain access to French language education for their children. Early in 1979, the new MLA for Bonnyville, using his detailed knowledge of the local educational scene, also sought Ministerial action to attempt to resolve educational conflicts in the constituency. The proposed oil-based economic development then anticipated for the area, highlighted the difficulties of coordinated educational planning when jurisdictional responsibility was so fragmented. The anticipated economic development in the area gave the Minister politically acceptable grounds on which to act.

Support for the principle of local autonomy in educational affairs as well as legal rights guaranteed to the minority religious group required that long term planning both to solve the jurisdictional conflicts and meet the needs of the expected population influx be attempted on a cooperative basis. By use of a Steering Committee comprising both provincial and local representatives and a study methodology that maximized local input, the Sage Institute was able to eventually lead all the former jurisdictions to agree to accept a major jurisdictional restructuring for the area.

Implementation. A complex and interrelated set of factors was evident in the implementation process. At least, four major factors variously influenced the area Boards in their decisions to accept reorganization. For the Catholic Districts the major factor was undoubtedly the distribution of assessment revenue from the proposed Esso oil-sands plant. Also of importance in enabling reorganization to occur was the compliant attitude of Division #46 trustees, a major change of attitude by Dr. B. Brosseau, Chairman of District #2665, and the emergence of an increased desire on the part of area trustees to seek a more cooperative approach to resolving educational conflicts in the area. Of lesser significance, but nevertheless important, was the supportive stance adopted toward reorganization by provincial interest groups, namely, the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta and the Alberta Catholic Schools Trustees' Association. Support from the Bishop of St. Paul was not a determining factor, but his opposition would probably have negated the whole project. The participatory decision-making process initiated by the Sage Institute not only helped ensure a broadly based acceptance by area trustees for its major recommendation, but also helped to generate a supportive community environment.

The Minister of Education desired to reorganize the complicated jurisdictional governance arrangements that had hindered the delivery of educational services in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area of Alberta. Given the broad consensus of opinion from area representatives on the Ministerial Advisory Committee and the approaching school board elections in the province slated for October 1980, the Minister determined to implement the recommended jurisdictional reorganization immediately. He feared that the existing consensus could have dissipated during the local election campaign.

Utilizing Section 25 of the **Alberta School Act** 1970, the Minister dissolved all the former jurisdictions in the area with the exception of Medley S.D.#5029 and established a

single public school District. Also included from Northland S.D.#61 was the Elizabeth Metis Settlement. Two Official Trustees were appointed for public and Catholic electors respectively. To protect himself from possible legal challenge over his use of Section 25 of the **School Act**, the Minister obtained written support from each of the former Boards and the acquiescence of ACSTA. Subsequently, in response to a petition from Roman Catholic electors in the area, the Minister established a Roman Catholic Separate School District coterminous with the new public District.

As part of the negotiations undertaken at the time of reorganization, the Minister of Education gave assurances to both public and Catholic trustees that various forms of provincial government support would be forthcoming. Funding was provided to the new Districts for the employment of an Enumeration Officer to oversee the compilation of both public and Catholic assessment rolls. In former Divisional areas this task led to a considerable degree of community conflict and bitterness. In addition, the Minister provided a package of operational assistance, a major purpose of which was to ensure that both the new Districts could be established with a sound financial base.

Consequences. An independent evaluation of the consequences of reorganization was beyond the scope of this study. Rather, perspectives on consequences were predominantly derived from interviews of both past and present trustees. The six areas of conflict identified earlier in the study - religion, language and ethnicity, boundaries and transportation, local assessment revenue, Bonnyville Centralized High School and inter-town rivalry were each addressed. A number of more general administrative and organizational consequences identified by the interviewees were also presented.

Largely because of the cancellation of the Esso project and the economic recession of the past few years, positive outcomes of the 1980 reorganization of jurisdictions have been recognized as less than expected. Many aspects of reorganization were premised on an economic growth philosophy, and when this did not ensue, matters that may have been easily settled became more problematic.

The maintenance of an open-door policy as presently practised by both Boards is likely to become more difficult. It places financial strains on the joint transportation policy and the tuition agreement. Its effect on transportation policy is a difficulty for the public District while its effect on tuition agreement costs are of concern to the Catholic District.

Given the present legal and financial restraints pursuant to school attendance in Alberta, continuing tension can be also expected between the desires of each District to maximize enrolments and revenue, and the political and philosophical views of parents who may not wish religion to determine the school to which they send their children.

Both Districts also suffer east-west tensions. The public District also has stresses resulting from urban-rural divisions while the Catholic District monitors closely potential internal difficulties over language policy and ethnicity.

Conflict Management Findings

Using Brown's conceptual framework, four major conflict elements were identified in the study: the former school jurisdictions, their leaders and representatives, the competitive interdependence that surrounded jurisdictional interaction, and the influence of the wider environmental context. Public interaction between the two Bonnyville jurisdictions was often, though by no means always, conflictual. Each tended to publicly perceive the other's interests and actions to be antipathetic. A total of ten factors were identified as influential in the successful intervention to reorganize area jurisdictions. Intervention had the effect of refocusing the behaviour of jurisdiction representatives, reallocating resources, reframing the issues and alternatives available and, by the formation of new jurisdictions, realigning the contextual forces.

Other findings concerned the importance of greater trust between senior provincial administrators and local representatives and the reduction in the level of conflict between the new jurisdictions, but with at least a potential for significant conflict within each District.

Reflections

Reflections were developed around three selected themes: leadership in interorganizational conflict, the organization of public education and multiculturalism. Questions were used to guide the reflections. The purpose was to ponder the meaning and implications each of the themes may have for administrative practice.

Five characteristics of leadership were suggested as applicable to situations involving interorganizational conflict: vision, flexibility, timing, participation and goodwill. The idea of reflection-in-action was suggested as not only a useful conceptualization but as a guide in the

practice of leadership.

A second set of reflections was developed around the theme of the organization of public education. The idea was argued that public education ought to be organized so that distinctive philosophical and religious values can find expression in a publicly funded school system. Problems associated with the present legal and organizational basis of public education in Alberta were discussed. In particular, the use of religious affiliations as a compulsory basis for educational organization was questioned. Short of constitutional amendment, an open-door admission policy based on provincially promoted tuition agreements was suggested as an administrative solution to the difficulty. The promotion of choice, it was argued, need not be at the cost of further fragmentation of school jurisdictional responsibility.

The appropriateness of the Lakeland coterminous public and Separate District model was discussed. Implementation of this model may be more difficult in areas lacking the financial incentive that former jurisdictions in the Bonnyville area had to give up their autonomy. It was also argued that the model requires the use of an open-door admissions policy by both Districts based on a tuition agreement.

Finally, the growing importance of the implications for educational administrators that language and organizational structures have for cultural preservation was discussed. Schools, it was suggested, are manifestations of culture and have in large measure control of the culture that is transmitted to children. In a democratic and multicultural society organizational structures ought to be sufficiently flexible to provide for a range of philosophical and cultural values to be expressed in the public school system. The francophone community appreciated the need to have a school system that reflected and transmitted their religious and cultural values. Alternate schools/programs within the public systems, including separate systems, was considered a desirable way to limit jurisdictional fragmentation.

B. Some Methodological Issues

In Chapter Two it was suggested that merit existed in attempting to use a naturalistic research paradigm as the basis for a case study of the 1980 jurisdictional reorganization which, it had been hoped, would resolve much of the conflict that existed between school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area. In this section question seven of the problem statement is addressed: How useful is a hermeneutically oriented naturalistic case study

methodology for research in educational administration? Three aspects of the methodology used in the study are discussed prior to presentation of a concluding comment. This discussion of aspects of the naturalistic methodology used is advanced as possibly representing a small contribution to the emerging debate over research methodologies in educational administration. As Greenfield (1975:187) has indicated, methodologies appropriate to non-positivistic research in that field "are not well developed."

Emergent Research Design

The major and subsidiary research question given in Chapter One guided the study. Although its general outline and direction had been established as a result of preliminary investigations, many decisions relating to details of the investigation could only be made subsequently. As the researcher's understanding deepened, new aspects of the study emerged that required decisions about the extent to which these ought to be pursued, what were the most useful sources of data and whether the amount of time required for their investigation was justifiable. In many instances emergent aspects of the study led to new insights and the reanalysis and recasting of earlier data.

The hypothesis testing approach of the more widely used positivist paradigm would have restricted and obscured much of the human interest component that arose in the course of the study. In fact, it is likely that such an inquiry design could have led to false findings due to the inquiry hypotheses having the effect of excluding significant data.

An emergent research design was useful in allowing the researcher to identify the multiple realities that pertained to the study. For example, very diverse understandings of the area's educational difficulties existed among local trustees. Department of Education administrators, because they were not part of the local communities, had very different considerations from those of the local people. A range of perceptions as to the purposes and most appropriate type of education were also evident among the various community groups in the area.

Guba and Lincoln (1981:57) refer to these multiple realities as being "like the layers of an onion" which "nest within or complement each other." The use of an emergent research paradigm enabled the researcher to partially peel back a number of these layers and thus gain a more complete understanding of the many different perspectives that participants brought to

the process of jurisdictional reorganization.

Because an emergent design results in progressive divergence of data, decisions to limit the scope of the study had to be made during its conduct. These decisions were largely guided by the research questions. Considerations of time, the availability of resources and the accessibility of potential respondents and documentary material, as well as the personal interest of the researcher also influenced such decisions.

Research Objectives

The study methodology enabled a wide range of interrelated influences to be identified as significant in the events that led to the reorganization of school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville area. Many of these concerned the individuals who were involved, the particular situations that confronted them, the interaction of both planned and unplanned sequences of events and the historical context in which the events occurred. The major research objectives in the study were to understand and to interpret the meanings that these events had for some of the key participants.

The researcher's belief that a large component of any administrative action centres on that which is unique to the situation was confirmed in the case of this study. Some of the consultancy and intervention procedures used in the Bonnyville reorganization would likely be applicable to other situations. Yet, because of its uniqueness, it is unlikely that any detailed set of generalizable laws and principles relating to the management of conflict developed on the basis of this study could be used to explain sufficiently similar situations and predict their outcomes.

The reasons for this appear to lie in the historical and existential experience of, the exercise of choice and the adoption and expression of particular values by the individuals and organizations involved in the events.⁵⁷⁶ Greenfield has argued that it is the operation of these aspects of personal "reflective consciousness" that contribute the "highest level of reality" and are not subject to measurement and verification as are aspects of lower levels of reality. He (1983a:3) states:

. . . even though some of the elements mingled into personal reality are hard,

⁵⁷⁶Here "organization" is understood phenomenologically: "This view sees organizations as accomplishments; as consequences of human action directed by individual will, intention and value which provide contexts for the negotiation and construction of meaning, moral order and power." (Bates, 1983:5)

scientific, and verifiable, they will never allow us to control or predict the highest personal reality of the individual from a knowledge of these lower kinds of reality.

The naturalistically oriented paradigm used for the study enabled some of the experiences, choices and values of key participants to be identified. Aspects of the manner in which these experiences, choices and values influenced the events were able to be discussed. In light of their demonstrated importance in this study, a research paradigm that tended to disregard them would have been clearly inadequate. The hermeneutic objectives of understanding and interpretation of the meanings that individuals attached to events constituted appropriate objectives for the study. The methodology used enabled these to be pursued; again, within the limitations of time and resources.

The Interrelation of Fact and Value

A number of researchers in educational administration have represented the separation of fact and value inherent in the positivist paradigm as a major current problem for research in the field. Bates (1982:4) has written:

The crisis of rationality is rooted in the positivistic separation of fact from value, means from ends, politics from administration, and the exclusion of discourse over ends, values and purposes.

Similarly Greenfield (1983b:297) has argued:

Facts and values are closely interwoven. Positivistic science insists on splitting them and disregarding the values. It thus ignores the most important part of our lives and falls into the error of thinking that values can be derived from facts. Facts decide nothing. It is we who decide about the facts.

In addressing the somewhat neglected field of ethical-moral concerns in educational administration, Enns (1981:8) concluded that an ethical-moral perspective "is crucial in administration." He stated that:

In the immediate past scholars have attempted to be descriptive, objective, scientific, and these attempts have yielded useful insights and approaches for understanding and shaping human activities. But it is becoming more and more evident that such approaches have been less than adequate since they have failed to take full account of a major dimension of human existence, namely, the ethical-moral.

In the reported study, the naturalistic methodology did not require that any attempt be made to artificially separate fact and value. The perspectives of individuals who had been involved in the study events were gathered through largely unstructured interviews and documentary searches. These methods not only enabled different perspectives of the same events from different individuals to be demonstrated, but also forced the researcher to be

constantly aware of the value framework through which individuals, including himself as researcher, viewed the subject of the inquiry. It is evident from the study report that the manner in which a given individual perceived education was largely influenced by personal values. The clearest example of such filtering in this study is shown in the recorded perspectives of some of the past and present francophone-Catholic school trustees.

This demonstration of the significance of values in shaping a person's understanding of fact accords with Greenfield's comment (1983a:48):

The consequence of the individual's imposition of value upon the world is an inseparable intertwining of fact and value in everyday life. Both individuals and administrators in organizations find that action can never be based on facts alone, but only on facts from the perspective of a value.

The methodology used in the study did not require any sterile effort to disentangle fact and value, but rather enabled some attempt to be made at holistically elucidating their significance in a particular administrative situation.

Concluding Comment

The naturalistic research paradigm was usefully applied to this study. As indicated in Chapter Three, validators commented positively on the accuracy and balance achieved in this report's four descriptive chapters. The usefulness of the paradigm was shown in the appropriateness to the study of an emergent research design and in the pursuit of understanding and interpretation as suitable objectives. A basic assumption contained in the paradigm, namely, that fact and value are interrelated, proved to be essential for presenting a more than superficial account of the reorganization of school jurisdictions in the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area.

Confines of space have precluded reflection on much of the rich data collected in the study. Not only could further comments be made on those matters discussed in Chapter Nine, but the data could provide a fruitful source of material for reflection in relation to other themes relevant to educational administration. Such themes could include the planning and implementation of organizational change; the influence of individual and group values on administrative decision-making; the political significance of personal relationships between Department of Education officials and local administrators and trustees; the ultimate unpredictability as to consequences, educational or otherwise, of any given administrative act; the politics of educational change; and the role of administrators in ideological control of

education.

Naturalistic methodology is one form of hermeneutically oriented inquiry that could be more widely used in research in educational administration. The assumptions on which it is based are in accord with anti-positivistic criticism that is currently levelled at much of past research in the field. It seems highly desirable, that a wider range of alternate methodologies be used in research in educational administration to establish their usefulness for advancing that research. The present study indicates that the naturalistic paradigm as explicated by Guba and Lincoln should be one of these alternate methodologies.

C. Postscript

Following the completion of this report, subsequent occurrences serve to illustrate the continuing significance of issues raised in this study.

Bonnyville Centralized High School

In May 1984 the Task Force Report on the Future of Bonnyville Centralized High School was released. The Task Force compared the major costs and benefits of two alternatives: (1) retention of the status quo and (2) Lakeland Catholic Board of Education take over the present high school and the public board independently develop their own high school.

After comparing the likely effects of each alternative on enrolments, programs, staffing and operating costs, capital costs and the fiscal capacity of the two Boards, the Task Force made two recommendations:

. . . that the present arrangements for delivering high school education in Bonnyville should be continued. The BCHS should continue to be used to provide high school instruction to all high school students in the Bonnyville area.

. . . that a new agreement should be completed whereby joint use of BCHS will be guaranteed for at least five years or until such time as the enrolment grows to a level where two high schools could be operated efficiently.

The Task Force also indicated that the School Buildings Board "will be reluctant to approve new high school space in Bonnyville," which the two high school alternative would

require, when adequate space is already available.⁵⁷⁷ In addition, as public District trustees have argued, this additional expenditure would result in neither a public nor a Catholic high school being able to offer the range of programs presently provided at BCHS.

These recommendations were rejected by the Catholic Board. One trustee was reported as commenting to the chairman⁵⁷⁸ of the Task Force that he was

. . . extremely disappointed in the task force and the work that it's done. You haven't even touched on how to resolve our problem [that a separate high school is needed to foster Catholic education].⁵⁷⁹

The chairman of the Task Force was reported as indicating that reference to arguments justifying a Catholic high school on religious grounds was avoided in the Report because the members did not consider themselves competent to judge such matters. Yet, religious justification constituted the basis of the Catholic Board's position. Following the publication of the Report of the Task Force, the superintendent of the Lakeland Catholic system had a long letter published by the local newspaper in which he defended the Catholic position solely on the basis of religious argument.⁵⁸⁰

The chairperson of the public Board, on the other hand was quoted as stating that "her district was very pleased with the efforts of the task force and that the trustees were in general agreement with their findings."⁵⁸¹ In an attempt to find a way of at least partially meeting Catholic religious needs, the Board of District #5460 stated in a press release that:

. . . in recognition of the specific concerns of the separate school board, relative to the spiritual needs of Catholic students, we are prepared to enter into further discussions with them regarding ways in which BCHS may be more effective in meeting these needs.⁵⁸²

The Catholic Board, however, felt unable to accept this offer. It decided to continue to pursue its objective of a Catholic high school despite the economic and curricula arguments used by the Task Force. The Catholic Board's superintendent argued that because the purpose of Catholic high school education is to continue and deepen each Christian student's "encounter with Christ", Christian staff members are required. In addition,

. . . the students as a group need occasions where they can together pray and worship in a festive, Christian way through:

(a) morning prayer;

⁵⁷⁷Task Force Report, p. 16.

⁵⁷⁸Dr. W. R. Duke, Associate Deputy Minister of Education.

⁵⁷⁹G. Tellier, quoted in *Grand Centre-Cold Lake Sun*, 22 May 1984, p. 2.

⁵⁸⁰L. Remillard, *Bonnyville Nouvelle*, 22 May 1984, p. 5.

⁵⁸¹H. Thaleshvar, *Bonnyville Nouvelle*, 22 May 1984, p. 1.

⁵⁸²*Bonnyville Nouvelle*, 22 May 1984, p. 1.

- (b) Eucharistic celebrations (at the beginning of the year, Advent, Lent, Graduation);
- (c) Sacrament of Reconciliation; and
- (d) the possibility of listening to important Christian leaders.

In a Catholic Christian school, the discipline would be Gospel inspired as should all other dimensions of education.

The big question is, "How can a public high school accept all the above orientation without betraying its nature without becoming a Catholic public high school?"

In fact, only the Catholic school can achieve the objectives of a Catholic Christian community."⁵⁸³

On 28 May 1984, the trustees of Lakeland Catholic Board of Education resolved to convert Notre Dame Junior High into a high school which by 1987 would provide for grades nine to twelve.⁵⁸⁴ The Board will now build a second elementary school in Bonnyville as its equity school promised by the province at the time of the 1980 reorganization. It appears likely, considering the views expressed by several trustees and the recent agitation by the Comité de Parents francophones, that eventually one elementary school will operate in English while the other will provide for francophone and immersion students.

This decision by the Catholic Board to develop its own high school has created considerable debate and renewed ill feeling in the area. On the basis of Task Force figures and an independent cost analysis published in the *Bonnyville Nouvelle* newspaper,⁵⁸⁵ public supporters argue that the decision will necessarily entail greater costs for them and reduced programs for their high school students. Also, the Catholic community has divided on the issue. For example, a petition by ninety-one Catholic supporters calling for continuation of the Catholic Board's participation in BCHS was tabled at a Board meeting on 20 June 1984. Letters for and against the decision were published in the local newspapers during June 1984. Both area newspapers have also editorialized against the decision. The Bonnyville newspaper has limited its criticism for the most part to the question of whether the Catholic Board has a mandate on the matter from its supporters.⁵⁸⁶ The *Grand Centre-Cold Lake Sun* has been more direct in its criticism. It has editorialized:

The essential point is that although the Catholics may have Canadian history and culture on their side they do not have morality on their side. This decision is wrong because it will harm the children who school trustees and administrators claim to care about. To begin with, the BCHS split itself is sure to be painful, as a social compact that has cemented cultures in Bonnyville is torn asunder at the tender high school age. But, more serious, it will harm the future of the public school students in particular and possibly that of the Catholic students.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸³L. Remillard, *Bonnyville Nouvelle*, 22 May 1984, p. 5.

⁵⁸⁴*Bonnyville Nouvelle*, 29 May 1984, p. 1; 5 June 1984, p. 1.

⁵⁸⁵12 June 1984, p. 5.

⁵⁸⁶e.g. Editorial, *Bonnyville Nouvelle*, 26 June 1984, p. 4.

⁵⁸⁷Editorial, *Grand Centre-Cold Lake Sun*, 5 June 1984, p. 6.

The Catholic Board's position in relation to such arguments concerning the socially divisive effect of the establishment of a Catholic high school has been outlined in a considered statement by the Catholic superintendent. He argued that pluralism (multiculturalism) provides a superior basis for social cohesion:

Pluralism is a reality that is meant to benefit all society by the sharing of values specific to each group. It is meant to lead to a deeper unity, a unity stemming from a greater humanization of society. What divides is not pluralism, it is "uniformity", the melting pot approach, the watering down of differences, the "assimilation" philosophy.

The best chance for a person or a group to become "co-operative" and therefore capable of unity and sharing, is for this person or group to become more and more herself or himself, allowing his or her uniqueness, originality or creativeness to blossom and be liberated.

People who are not recognized and loved for what they are, become aggressive, destructive and divisive. The attitude of ignoring the individuality of persons or groups is destructive and therefore divisive. This is a basic assumption of human rights philosophy.⁵⁸⁸

The central question that remains is how far can expressions of the individuality of persons and groups be permitted when measured against the economic and social welfare of others and of the community as a whole? Can and should the Minister of Education overrule the decision of the Catholic Board to pursue the development of its own high school? Given its difficult financial situation and its desire to retain joint operation of BCHS, is it reasonable to expect the public Board to compensate the Catholic Board for its half interest in the present BCHS? As both Boards confront financial realities, what will happen to the present open admission policy? Will Catholic supporters be able to send their children to the public high school if that is their preference and will the public Board be so prepared to allow its students to attend the Catholic schools, even for immersion programs?

It would seem that the presence of two high schools has the potential to continue the legal, political, linguistic, religious and economic problems and conflicts that have surrounded education in Bonnyville. As in the past, the desires of individual parents and their children will come into confrontation with the economic interests of the two Districts. On the other hand, should these conflicts be held to a manageable level, it is possible to foresee the emergence of a limited bi-campus approach to high school education in Bonnyville, which would help to overcome curriculum difficulties that the two smaller high schools will inevitably face.

⁵⁸⁸L. Remillard, *Bonnyville Nouvelle*, 22 May 1984, p. .

Catholic Education in Grand Centre/Cold Lake

Following considerable recent consultation involving trustees, administrators and Catholic supporters in Grand Centre and Cold Lake, the Catholic Board has resolved, as part of its long term planning, to centre Catholic elementary education for both Grand Centre and Cold Lake at St. Dominic's school in Cold Lake. Assumption school in Grand Centre will become a junior and senior high school also serving both towns.⁵⁸⁹ In this way, the Catholic Board has achieved another of its objectives - the development of a Catholic high school for the eastern half of the district without significantly greater cost to itself as most of the additional transport costs will be underwritten by the province. The arrangement will not only assist the Catholic Board in curtailing its loss of students in both towns to the public schools, it will possibly open up increased opportunities for the development of a bi-campus approach to high school education in Grand Centre considering the relative proximity of Assumption School and Grand Centre High School.

French Language Education

In a recent brief to the Policy Advisory Committee on the Review of the Secondary Education Program, the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta argued that to provide for the rights given in Section 23 of the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**, "School legislation and the regulations ensuing from it must provide for a mechanism guaranteeing French as first language of instruction for all Francophone students in Alberta."⁵⁹⁰ In the brief it is argued that French language schools are urgently required because bilingual secondary schools have failed to meet the needs of Franco-Albertan students and are "nothing more than a palliative which [have] proven [their] inefficiency vis-a-vis Franco-Albertan education."⁵⁹¹

It is argued that bilingual schools are contributing to the assimilation of francophone students into the anglophone culture, hindering their French linguistic competency and inevitably leading to English unilingualism, increasing their drop-out rate from secondary school, dispossessing them of their cultural identity and providing an inappropriate curriculum especially in English, French and Social Studies.

⁵⁸⁹Grand Centre-Cold Lake Sun, 22 May 1984, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁰Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta, 1984, **Franco-Albertan Students and Secondary School Education**, p. 8.

⁵⁹¹ibid, Introduction.

A spokesman for the Association is quoted in a recent newspaper report as saying that, "Right now the discretionary powers [over French language instruction] are given to local school boards and we would like to see a safeguard reflected in the **School Act**."⁵⁹² The report indicated the possibility of legal action by the Association based on Section 23 of the **Charter of Rights** as a means of overcoming apparent political unwillingness on the part of the provincial government to support such a guarantee in the province's **School Act**.

⁵⁹²Edmonton Journal, 16 June 1984, p. B1.

XI. BIBLIOGRAPHY

There are two main sources for the documents cited in this dissertation. One is the files of present and former school jurisdictions in the Central Records of the Alberta Department of Education. As well, other Departmental files relating to the Swift Inquiry (1972), the Ad Hoc Special Projects Committee and the 1979-1980 Ministerial Advisory Committee appointed to inquire into the educational needs of the Bonnyville/Cold Lake/Grand Centre area were consulted. The second source is the files held by the Lakeland public and Catholic school jurisdictions.

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Letters were received from the following:

Bishop R. Roy, Roman Catholic Bishop of St. Paul, 10 January 1984.

Hon. D. L. King, Minister of Education, 1 March 1984.

W. T. Worbets, formerly Assistant Director of Field Services, Department of Education, 2 March 1984.

XII. APPENDICES

A. List of Interviewees

Below are listed persons interviewed, date of interview and the position held by the interviewee relevant to the study.

V. Armstrong, 18 January 1984, systems analyst, Sage Institute of Canada

E. Bisson, 23 November 1983, trustee, Grand Centre Catholic Board of Education

H. E. Bourgoin, 10 November 1983, teacher, Duclos school, 1928-1948; Glendon school, 1948-1962

L. Bujold, 4 November 1983, trustee, Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64, 1968-1980; Lakeland Catholic Board of Education, 1980-1983

G. Burge, 24 November 1983, Secretary-Treasurer, Lakeland Catholic Board of Education

J. Clarke, 14 November 1983, Field Administrative Officer Department of Education

P. Collins, 23 November 1983, trustee, Lakeland Catholic Board of Education

J. Coulombe, 10 November 1983, trustee, Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67, 1977-1980; Lakeland Catholic Board of Education

B. Decoux, 2 February 1984, acting superintendent, Bonnyville S.D.2665, Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64, Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67, 1979-1980

W. Duke, 24 January 1984, Director of Finance, Statistics Legislation, Department of Education

A. Edstrom, 27 January 1984, trustee, Bonnyville S.Div.#46, 1968-198

C. Gault, 25 November 1983, Secretary-Treasurer, Bonnyville S.Div.#46; Lakeland School District

W. Hayduk, 9 November 1983, assistant superintendent Bonnyville S. Div.#46; Lakeland S.D.#5460

R. Holland, 18 January 1984, General Manager, Sage Institute of Canada

E. Isley, 20 February 1984, MLA Bonnyville, Minister of Manpower, formerly principal, Bonnyville Centralized High School, 1971-1978

G. Kiernan, 26 January 1984, superintendent, Lakeland S.D.#5460

J. Kulba, 30 January 1984, Director of School Buildings Branch, Department of Education

G. Kuschminder, 1 February 1984, superintendent, Bonnyville S. Div.#46; Lakeland S.D.#5460, 1980-1981

J. C. Lajoie, 9 November 1983, trustee, Lakeland Catholic Board of Education

H. A. MacNeil, 12 December 1983, Official Trustee, Beaver River S.D.#5460, Lakeland R.C.S.S.D.#150, 11 Sept 1980 - 12 Nov 1980

K. McKinney, 31 January 1984, Executive Director, Alberta Catholic School Trustees Association

F. Michaud, 4 November 1983, trustee, Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67, 1974-1980

J. Moquin, 8 June 1984, superintendent, Bonnyville S.D.#2665, 1969-1975

S. N. Odynak, 24 January 1984, Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Education

R. Penrice, 13 December 1983, formerly, Field Administrative Officer, Department of Education; Executive Assistant to Minister of Education, 1971-1976

R. Piper, 23 November 1983, trustee, Lakeland S.D.#5460, formerly executive member of the A-Quest group

L. Remillard, 6 January 1984, superintendent, Lakeland Catholic Board of Education

A. Ryll, 4 November 1983, trustee, Bonnyville S.D.#46, 1977-1980; Lakeland S.D.#5460, 1980-1982; Member of Ministerial Advisory Committee. Presently deputy principal, Bonnyville Centralized High School

S. Skuba, 3 November 1983, superintendent, Bonnyville S.Div.#46, 1970-1979

B. L. Stringham, 18 January 1984, Director, Sage Institute of Canada. Formerly Director of Field Services, Department of Education, 1971-1979

W. H. Swift, 8 December 1983, Deputy Minister of Education, Alberta, 1955-1969

H. Thaleshvar, 23 November 1983, trustee, Lakeland S.D.#5460; formerly, executive member of A-Quest group

S. J. Thiessen, 31 January 1984, Secretary, Ministerial Advisory Committee, 1979-1980

E. A. Torgunrud, 1 February 1984, Director of Field Services, Department of Education, 1979-1983

C. Vincent, 9 November 1983, chairman Lakeland Catholic Board of Education. Formerly trustee of Bonnyville S.D.#2665 and Bonnyville R.S.D.#4

R. Ward, 15 December 1983, Official Trustee, Beaver River/Lakeland S.D.#5460, 11 Sept 1980 - 12 Nov 1980

B. List of Validators

The following persons participated in validation procedures. Also indicated is the position each held relevant to the study.

M. Beaudoin, superintendent, Bonnyville S.D.#2665, Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64 and Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67, 1976-1980; Lakeland Catholic Board of Education, 1980-1982

T. Bodnar, former principal Glendon school; trustee Lakeland S.D.#5460

G. Kuschminder, superintendent, Bonnyville S.Div.#46; Lakeland S.D.#5460, 1980-1981

J. Moquin, superintendent, Bonnyville S.D.#2665, Cold Lake R.C.S.S.D.#64 and Grand Centre R.C.S.S.D.#67, 1969-1975

S. Odynak, Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Education

R. Piper, trustee, Lakeland S.D.#5460, formerly executive member of the A-Quest group

S. Skuba, superintendent, Bonnyville S.Div.#46, 1970-1979

B. Stringham, Director, Sage Institute of Canada, formerly Director of Field Services, Department of Education, 1971-1979

G. Torgunrud, Director of Field Services, Department of Education, 1979-1983

C. Critical Success Factors

At a meeting of the Steering Committee held in Bonnyville on 18 February 1980, a listing of factors considered critical to mission success was structured. The absence of these factors, it was felt, could lead to mission failure. The list follows:

A) Buildings

- buildings in place on time
- noting the housing trends
- flexible provision of student space
- sharing of student space
- site acquisition
- special education provision
- vocational/industrial education provision
- planning -- short, medium and long range
- appropriate and feasible time lines
- three-year capital budget submissions
- coordinated plan for the region
- change in use of facilities
- employment trends should be studied
- location of school sites
- board/administration office space

B) Programming

- needs assessment (what is, what might be, what is elsewhere)
- measure of comparability with rest of province, and/or rest of Canada
- counselling services
- subject areas and characteristics to be developed:

Needed
 Reading
 Math
 Science
 Social Studies
 Phys.ED.
 Fine Arts
 Language Arts

Desirable
 Religious Studies
 Cultural Awareness
 Critical Analysis
 Creative Development
 Re-Creation

Nice to Have
 Vocational Ed.
 Industrial Ed.
 Home Economics
 Pre-Vocational Ed.
 Automotives
 Business Ed.
 Special Ed.

- accommodate parental concerns and responsibilities
- accommodate new delivery systems
- work experience
- atmosphere of school, i.e., educational philosophy

C) Transportation

- get student to school, economically and safely
- how much (total dollars, percentage of budget) should be spent on transportation
- routing implications
- cooperation of boards
- equity in programming (don't take educational dollars for granted)
- influence on (school board) autonomy of transportation needs
- location of schools

D) Governance

- cooperation of existing jurisdictions
- representation on existing boards
- possible amalgamation of, or creation of more, school boards
- public participation
- population mix will change
- legal question of school board name retention
- relationship to municipal boundaries
- on-going, new relationships between local boards, government and industry
- school sizes (particularly high schools)
- organizational patterns, districts and high schools
- local, provincial and federal funding shares

E) Funding

- timing
- local-provincial distribution of revenues
- contribution of industry
- assessment bases
- plant is located in Northland School Division and majority of students will go to schools in one of the other six board's jurisdictions. Do other boards obtain some tax revenues? How? (Possible division boundary expansion? Whose?) How do these resources serve the entire area?
- public/separate split
- what design? features?
- equalization of resources?
- implications of "sharing"
- pre-payment of facilities
- local boards want to avoid large debts
- equitable distribution of funds to permit population to develop and provide programming they desire

F) Energy

- provide more energy efficient schools
- efficient transportation of students
- up-grade existing facilities to be more energy efficient
- power rates are inappropriate

G) Other areas of concern include: problem of building a sense of "community" among transient and new residents; and consideration of Indian and Metis people. It was understood that a complete listing of issues would be included in the "blue" document or first document submitted to the committee. Various specific objectives were discussed. These objectives arose from consideration of the overall mission statement, and include:

- to reinforce moral and cultural values of entities within the community mosaic
- to accommodate diverse orientations to moral and cultural positions within the community
- to adapt to changing circumstances as we preserve lasting values
- to accommodate alternatives as changes occur
- to ameliorate the damaging effects of prejudice
- to assist pupils to prepare for and to secure permanent employment in the area after completing school

D. Principles on which Recommendations of the Sage Institute were Based

Upon reviewing notes of conversations, rechecking impressions with the Steering Committee and administrators, and examining the concerns mentioned by the public, the study team formulated the following principles. These principles were used to measure the adequacy of each of the scenarios.

1. Decisions that are made should address the interests of children and families before they address the interests of companies, boards and educators.
2. Solutions should ensure quality education now, during and after the period of rapid population increase.
3. Solutions should benefit all children equally throughout the area.
4. Moral, linguistic and cultural aspirations of the existing population must be encouraged and accommodated.
5. Recommendations for changes in legal structures where proposed must fit within existing laws and be generalizable throughout the province.
6. Distribution of funds for both capital and operational purposes should be equal on a per pupil basis.
7. While the interests of all sub-groups must be recognized and addressed, they also must be balanced against the interests of the entire population.
8. The governing structures in the area should be large enough to be educationally adequate and economically efficient, yet small enough to retain popular interest and control.
9. Solutions must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate rapid changes as development becomes more visible.
10. Solutions should emphasise adequate and enriched programs for all children.
11. Solutions should contribute towards total community support of the schools.
12. The solutions must make possible the resolution of the failure sequences identified in the SAGE analysis part of the study.

E. Extracts of Federal and Provincial Statutes

The following extracts from both federal and provincial statutes have been referred to in the study.

Constitution Act 1981 (formerly BNA Act, 1867)

93. In and for each province the Legislature may exclusively make laws in relation to education

Schedule B - Charter of Rights and Freedoms

23.(1) Citizens of Canada

(a) whose first language learned and still understood is that of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province in which they reside, or
(b) who have received their primary school instruction in Canada in English or French and reside in a province where the language in which they received that instruction is the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province,
have the right to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in that language in that province.

(2) Citizens of Canada of whom any child has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in English or French in Canada, have the right to have all their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the same language.

(3) The right of citizens of Canada under subsections (1) and (2) to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of a province

(a) applies wherever in the province the number of children of citizens who have such a right is sufficient to warrant the provision to them out of public funds of minority language instruction; and

(b) includes, where the number of those children so warrants, the right to have them receive that instruction in minority language educational facilities provided out of public funds.

Ordinances of the Northwest Territories, 1901

Chapter 29, S41. The minority of the ratepayers in any district whether Protestant or Roman Catholic may establish a separate school therein; and in such case the ratepayers establishing such a Protestant or Roman Catholic separate school shall be liable only to assessment of such rates as they impose upon themselves in respect thereof.

Alberta Act, 1905

17. Section 93 of the **British North America Act, 1867**, shall apply to the said Province, with the substitution for paragraph 1 of the said section 93 of the following paragraph:

(1) Nothing in any such law shall prejudicially affect any right or privilege with respect to separate schools which any class of persons have at the date of the passing of this Act, under the terms of chapters 29 and 30 of the **Ordinances of the North-West Territories**, passed in the year 1901, or with respect to religious instruction in any public or separate school as provided for in the said Ordinances.

School Act, 1970

14. (1) The Minister may establish any portion of Alberta as a public school district.

22. (1) Upon any inclusion, exclusion, dissolution or transfer of lands or districts or upon the formation of a district, the Minister, if he considers any adjustment of assets and liabilities necessary, shall in the same or a subsequent order, give directions with respect to the assets and liabilities of any board affected by the inclusion, exclusion, dissolution, transfer or formation and the directions are binding upon the board.

25. The Minister may declare that any district or division be dissolved and thereupon the board is dissolved and ceases to have any of the rights, powers and privileges vested in it by this Act and the district or division ceases to exist.

50. (1) The minority of electors in any district, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, may establish a separate school therein, and in such case the electors establishing a Protestant or Roman Catholic separate school are liable only to assessments of such rates as they impose upon themselves in respect thereof, and any person who is legally assessed or assessable for a public school in the district is not liable to assessment for any separate school therein.

(2) The petition for the establishment of a separate school district shall be signed by three electors of the religious faith indicated in the name of the proposed district and shall be in the form prescribed by the Minister.

(3) The persons qualified to vote for or against the establishment of a separate school district are the electors in the district who are of the same religious faith, Protestant or Roman Catholic, as the petitioners.

51. (1) Where as a result of a vote at a meeting held under section 50 the majority of the electors voting for or against the district have voted in favour thereof the Minister by order shall establish the separate school district with the same boundaries of those of the public school district.

53. After the establishment of a separate school district, a person residing within the boundaries of the separate school district who is of the faith of those who established that district, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, is a resident of the separate school district and a separate school supporter and is not a resident of the public school district or a public school supporter.

56. (1) A board of a separate school district

(a) may of its own volition, or

(b) shall if 25 percent of the electors of the separate school district petition the board to dissolve the district,

conduct a plebiscite to determine whether the separate school district should be dissolved.

(2) The question which the plebiscite shall determine is "Do you favour the dissolution of The Separate School District No."

(3) If the plebiscite results in a vote in favour of the dissolution of the separate school district the board shall report that fact to the Minister.

(4) The Minister upon a request of the board pursuant to subsection (3) shall dissolve the board of the separate school district and that district and thereupon the former separate school residents become residents of the public school district or division within whose boundaries they reside.

57. (1) Where a separate school district has been established, the religion of the owner of the property liable to assessment, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, determines whether the property is assessable for public or separate school purposes.

(2) Where a person is neither a Protestant nor a Roman Catholic, property is assessable for the public school district (and he is deemed to be a public school supporter) or, if he supports the separate school district, his property is assessable for the separate school district (and he is deemed to be a separate school supporter).

(3) Where the religion of a person is not known his property is assessable and taxable for public school purposes.

59. (1) Upon the establishment of a separate school district, the board of a separate school district shall submit to each municipality within which the district lies a list of names and addresses of all electors whose property is liable to assessment and taxation for the support of the separate school district according to the information available to the board.

(2) The board shall also submit a list of the names and addresses of all persons who were at the time of the establishment of the separate school district electors of the public school district, and who are separate school supporters by virtue of section 53 and section 57 according to the information available to the board.

150. (1) A board may authorize

(a) that French be used as a language of instruction . . .

(2) A board authorizing French . . . as a language of instruction shall comply with the regulations of the Minister.

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